

Making a Home in the Ashes:  
Pastoral Caregiver Experiences of Care in the Wake of the Las Vegas Mass Shooting.

Submitted by

Joseph Kim Paxton

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment  
Of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctorate of Philosophy

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CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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by

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## CLAREMONT SCHOOL OF THEOLOGY

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I verify that my dissertation represents original research, is not falsified or plagiarized, and that I accurately reported, cited, and referenced all sources within this manuscript in strict compliance with APA and Claremont School of Theology (CST) guidelines. I also verify that my dissertation complies with the approval(s) granted for this research investigation by the CST Institutional Review Board (IRB).

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Joseph Kim Paxton

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Date

## Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my mom.

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The greatest achievement throughout the doctoral journey has been the friends and colleagues I've made along the way. First and foremost, I am grateful for my advisor, Duane, for his help, wisdom, and guidance in this (long) journey. Duane is the most "politely wise" individual I have ever met. During an advising meeting he once shared that there are three ways to make a point, with a semaphore, a metaphor, or a 2x4. In my experience, Duane prodigiously offers wisdom and guidance via semaphore. Therefore, it is important to listen and pay attention, and deeply consider what he says or run the risk of missing thoughtful insights and life wisdom.

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"I remember when I interviewed at Case Western, all the grad students from all the labs telling me how kind Julie was, and that certainly was an understatement. She's one of the few professors that really wanted to connect deeply with her mentees and watch them grow as people and as professionals."

I met Julie in Long Beach, California, at the annual Society for Social and Personality Psychology conference. A short time before the conference I sent her an email, inquiring about her research on spiritual struggle and anger toward God. To my surprise, she responded and generously engaged my question, while also offering the opportunity to meet in Long Beach. She dedicated nearly two hours of her conferencing time to meet with me, an unrelated “nobody” in the world of psychology and practical and pastoral theology. This was a significant experience for me because no other senior scholar, let alone a prolific and highly sought-after researcher and scholar, had returned an email or offered time to meet with me in the many emails and inquiries I had sent out into the academic world during my graduate studies. Julie’s kindness is pervasive and it has been an incredible and undeserved gift throughout my studies at Claremont. To Duane, to Frank, and to Julie, thank you.

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## Abstract

To date, there are no published studies in either the social sciences or practical theology that have examined the phenomenon of a mass shooting. To redress the gap in the literature, a qualitative phenomenological research design will be employed to examine pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting. The goal of this study is to identify and clarify what pastoral caregivers did, what worked well, what did not work so well, and what can be done in future contexts of care for a mass shooting. Interviews will be transcribed and the data will be analyzed using mixed methods from hermeneutic phenomenology and practical theology. Emergent themes will be described and their significance discussed. Participant data will be engaged in a transversal interdisciplinary mutual critical conversation (Pattison, 1989; Root, 2014) to address psychological and pastoral theological dimensions of pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting. Witnessing (Hunsinger, 2015; Rambo, 2010) will be described and situated within a pastoral theology of the cross (Thornton, 2002) to construct an approach to care for the context of a mass shooting. Limitations and directions for future research will be discussed.

*Keywords: Pastoral theology, mass shooting, trauma, pastoral care, spiritual care*

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## Preface

### Origins of The Study of a Mass Shooting

What inspires or motivates a person to take action and respond to a social issue? Sparks (2017) published a dissertation that proposed a political psychological theory of activism. The *psychological proximity hypothesis* states that people are more likely to become involved in and respond to a social issue when the issue is geographically and/or socially proximal. In other words, a person who knows someone, was personally involved, and/or was geographically proximal to an event, will be more likely to take action than an individual who is distal and does not know anyone personally affected.

The Las Vegas mass shooting was *just another* mass shooting until I discovered my friend, and college roommate's father, had been shot and killed in the Las Vegas mass shooting. At the time, October 1, 2017, I was ready to submit a dissertation proposal to study lament and anger toward God. By October 3, I felt compelled to change my dissertation topic to study the phenomenon of a mass shooting. As a pastoral caregiver, I could not imagine how I would or should respond to a mass shooting. I read articles and books on the phenomenon of a mass shooting, mass casualty events, and trauma, but I could not find any literature on spiritual care for the context of a mass shooting. I was curious and wanted to know what pastors in Las Vegas did to respond to the mass shooting.

### How to Read This Dissertation

This is a very specialized interdisciplinary, multidisciplinary, and cross disciplinary dissertation. If you are *only* interested in pastoral caregiver experiences and emergent themes of the study, read Chapter 4. If you are looking for tools and resources for pastoral care in the wake of a mass shooting, read Chapter 5. Here, I present two approaches to care, that I situate as

functions of pastoral care, to recommend *bearing* (Hunsinger, 2015) and *remaining* (Rambo, 2010) as helpful responses in the wake of a mass shooting. In addition, I discuss *why* a pastoral theology of the cross (Thornton, 2002) is helpful, not only conceptually, but pastorally. An idea, both empirical and theoretical, that I try to construct is that the functions of bearing and remaining can prevent pastoral defensiveness (against death, uncertainty, and spiritual struggle) in traumatic care situations.

This dissertation will be of interest for scholars who study the integration of psychology and theology. While integration has traditionally occurred between clinical psychology and theology (Carter & Narramore, 1979; Collins & Mahoney, 1981), this dissertation will focus on the integration of social psychology and practical and pastoral theology. I will look to and describe social psychological research in terror management theory (Greenberg et al., 1986), uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2011), and spiritual struggle (Exline et al., 2014). My practical theology will be disciplinarily defined by Root (2009), pragmatically described by Osmer (2008), and empirically situated by Swinton and Mowat (2016). My approach to pastoral theology and care will be situated in the functions of care (Clebsch & Jaekle, 1964), methodologically defined by the cross (Thornton, 2002), and interpreted through the lens of trauma (Hunsinger, 2015; Rambo, 2010). Scholars interested in social psychology and pastoral theologies of the trauma and the cross may find this dissertation of particular interest.

My suggestion is to *not read* the dissertation in its entirety. Instead, identify areas of interest in the table of contents and conduct a close reading with those sections. I recommend skim-reading the introduction to the study and the introduction to the phenomenon of a mass shooting in Chapter 1. This will give you a general overview of *what* specific phenomenon I will be studying and the terminology associated with the study of a mass shooting. If you only have

time to read one chapter, read Chapter 4. This chapter highlights the emergent themes of this study.

### Goals of The Dissertation

There are two goals for this dissertation. The first goal seeks to fill an empirical gap in social scientific and practical theological literature by describing pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting (Chapter 4). Second, this dissertation will organize participant wisdom to recommend tools, skills, and resources for pastors who may face a future context of a mass shooting. Last, this (Chapter 5).

### Locating the Author

I am 34-year-old cis-gender, hetero, neurodivergent, Korean-adoptee who identifies as male. I did not grow up connected to a Korean community, although my parents, every summer, would enroll us in, “Korean Culture Camp.” In addition, in middle-school, my parents became friends with Uni, a Korean college student at Arizona State University, and Uni would spend time with us, teach us about Korean culture, and invite us to her church. To this day, I know little about Korean culture, the norms, the values, or the history. I have been shaped primarily by Mid-western North American culture and the norms and values of family, hospitality, and being a “good” neighbor.

I grew up in a middle-class household in Stillwater, Minnesota, with two cis-gender, hetero parents. My mother was born in Madison, Wisconsin, and my father was born in Fargo, North Dakota. My sister is 11-months older than me and she is also adopted from South Korea; we are not biologically related. Growing up in the Mid-west socialized me into a culture and norm of helping others and hospitality. Being a “good” neighbor was about *being there* for your

neighbors and helping your neighbors. My experience is that people were willing to go to great lengths to be a neighbor and friend. This context has given me a deep commitment to helping others, service, and hospitality.

When my parents moved to Chandler, Arizona, I experienced the harsh reality of racism. The feelings of “otherness”, ostracism, and difference were deeply formative. In terms of my core values, this has cultivated an intersectional sensitivity and compassion for people on the margins and encourages me daily to be mindful of my privileges and position in life so that I can work for equality, equity, and inclusion of others. My friend, who is a Caucasian female, said this about how I live out value and inclusion for people on the margins. She said, “You like to build people a stage and give them a microphone, that’s my experience with you. You like to see other people shine, and encourage it.” The essence of my core values are summed up in this image. I like to find people who may be “behind-the-scenes”, who, for complex and intersectional reasons, may not have a stage, and I seek to find ways to include and incorporate them in more central and significant roles on the stage of life.

When I was in high school, two very close friends died, one in a freak golfing accident and the other to suicide. These experiences profoundly shaped and influenced my life. From those experiences, I was diagnosed with Major Depressive Disorder. Out of those experiences, however, I have been drawn to and inspired to pursue a “helping” vocation. First, I pursued graduate training in clinical psychology and worked as a counseling intern for a number of years. This vocation transitioned and turned to pastoral ministry, and I currently work as the senior pastor of Lihue Lutheran Church in Lihue, Hawaii. I am ordained in the ELCA – Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. My personal and theological commitments have been deeply shaped by my experiences of mid-western hospitality, parental values of care and concern for

people on the margins, my experiences of “otherness” from racism, and neurodivergence.

Combined, these form core aspects of who I am and influence and affect the way I see the world and choose to live in the world.

What I bring to this dissertation is the desire to amplify voices that may not have had a microphone, or a stage. It is my belief that pastoral theologians and social scientists, who often inhabit the “lime light,” to quote P3, need to hear the living wisdom of pastoral caregivers in the context of the Las Vegas mass shooting. Their wisdom is the foundation, and a core source, for the academic work “we” do. In addition, my desire to help others inspires the drive to generate resources for pastors who may face a future context of a mass shooting.

## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### Introduction

The vivid images of the Las Vegas mass shooting poured onto national news websites on the night October 1, 2017. Blankenstein et al. (2017), of NBC news, reported rapid gunfire streaming out of the 32<sup>nd</sup> floor of a Las Vegas hotel, wounding over 500 and killing at least 59. Questions quickly developed surrounding the identity and background of Stephen Paddock (Del Real & Bromwich, 2017), how many guns Stephen Paddock had, how the shooting unfolded, if he had any connections to terrorist groups, and how hospitals responded to the sudden influx of victims (Belson et al., 2017). In addition, The New York Times provided a detailed timeline and choreographed video footage from multiple sources to detail, minute-by-minute events as they unfolded during the mass shooting (Belson et al., 2017). Blankenstein et al. (2017) described the Las Vegas mass shooting as the “worst” mass shooting of our times.

For pastoral caregivers, a mass shooting can create a lot of questions. How should a pastoral caregiver respond to a mass shooting? What should they do? What shouldn’t they do? What is helpful? What is less helpful?

A short look into the literature in both the social sciences and practical and pastoral theology reveal a limited number of publications in the area of psychology, religion, and spirituality and no publications in practical or pastoral theology in the area of care in the context of a mass shooting. The largest resource in psychological literature is the *Wiley Handbook on the Psychology of a Mass Shooting* (Wilson, 2017). The handbook defines and explores the psychological study of a mass shooting focusing on the psychological profiles of shooters, the role and effects of the media in the wake of a mass shooting, the psychological impact for victims, and clinical interventions.

The dilemma with this resource is that it is empirically focused. Therefore, if a pastoral caregiver were to look into the psychological study of a mass shooting for care practices, they would find clinically-based resources. This would require the pastoral work of translating clinical care to pastoral care. In the wake of a mass shooting a pastoral caregiver will have to respond to the immediate and arising needs of their community. They will not have the time to sit and read research and then attempt to construct care practices based upon the research they have read. What pastoral caregivers need are insights and living wisdom from other pastoral caregivers who have provided care in the context of a mass shooting so that they can create and modify their own approaches to care for their context of a mass shooting.

Perhaps the most accessible resource is by Odyssey Impact (2021) with their “Wounded Healers” project. The Wounded Healers project interviewed pastoral caregivers who have provided care in disaster situations. Odyssey Impact conducted an interview with Matthew Crebin, a pastor who provided care in the context of Sandy Hook. Here, Pastor Crebin provides living wisdom to describe what he did and what he experienced. The dilemma, however, is that pastors may not be aware this resource is available and they may not have the money to access this resource.

If pastoral caregivers want resources to guide their approach to care in the wake of a mass shooting, they will have to spend time to read or spend money to obtain pastoral resources. I would argue that time and money are two major resources that pastoral caregivers often do not have. Carter (2018) reflects on the intersectional challenges facing seminary students and pastoral caregivers, supporting my assessment that time and access are real issues for pastoral caregivers (pp. 241-243). Therefore, the pastoral caregiver, in my assessment, will respond to disaster by looking first and foremost to their own experiences and embodied knowledge of

pastoral care. Organically, they will modify and assimilate what they have experienced and what they have learned into an embodied practice. The aim of this dissertation stands on the assumption that pastoral caregivers in the Las Vegas context possess living wisdom of pastoral care in the wake of a mass shooting. I want to learn from the grassroots, organic, and local care of pastoral caregivers in the Las Vegas area to identify what they experienced and what they did. In addition, I want to discern what suggestions and recommendations they would have for pastors facing a future context of a mass shooting.

### Background of the Study

Lawler and Rummier (2020) describe a list of the 20 deadliest mass shootings in North America. Their list includes Columbine, Sandy Hook, the Century 16 movie theater in Aurora, Colorado, the Borderline Bar & Grill, the Pulse Night Club, the Route 91 Harvest music festival in Las Vegas, and Virginia Tech. Cregan (2013), Vinicky (2020), Green (2019), have all documented how pastors have responded to a mass shooting, identifying experiences and responses. Cregan (2013) describes one pastoral caregiver encouraging people affected to donate in the wake of the mass shooting as a way to cope and respond to the tragedy. Vinicky (2020) highlights the “newness” of the event by quoting a pastor who said, “I had never seen anything like this before.” Green (2019) describes a pastor saying, “I knew my people would need comfort.”

Pastors who have responded to a mass shooting may not have known what to do, initially, but those who felt compelled to do something did something. In responding to the needs that arose in the context of a mass shooting they learned something about pastoral care in the context of a mass shooting. I want to know what current theories, approaches, or methods of pastoral care are, or are not, sufficient for the context of a mass shooting. Does the living and local

wisdom of pastoral caregivers who responded to the Las Vegas mass shooting correlate to extant wisdom in pastoral theology? Where does a mass shooting fit in the theory of pastoral care and counseling? Do traditional theories and techniques, methods and approaches, work, and help, in the wake of a mass shooting?

### Need for the Study

Wilson (2017) points out conundrums in the psychological study of a mass shooting. She suggests that traditional frameworks, like the psychopathology of post-traumatic stress disorder, do not fully apply or fit the symptomatology of individuals who have been exposed to or have endured a mass shooting. If a mass shooting, then, is psychologically unique from other types of trauma, how can and should pastoral theology respond to the nuances of victim experiences? Is the current theory and practice of pastoral care able to meet, address, and provide care for the unique symptoms and experiences of victims of a mass shooting?

This study is needed to learn, discern, and understand what traumatological experiences are unique, and in what ways they are particular, to a mass shooting. In addition, discourse and dialogue is needed to discern to what degree(s) historical and contemporary approaches to pastoral care can adequately respond to the unique experiences of a mass shooting. Empirically, this study is needed to fill the gaps in psychological research and practical and pastoral theology regarding pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting.

### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to describe what pastors experienced in the wake of the Las Vegas mass shooting. In addition, this study will correlate living and local wisdom of Las Vegas pastoral caregivers with historical and contemporary approaches to pastoral care. Specifically,

this dissertation will correlate living and local wisdom of Las Vegas pastoral caregivers with the historic functions of care (Clebsch & Jaekle, 1964), theologies of trauma (Hunsinger, 2015; Rambo, 2010), and a pastoral theology of the cross (Thornton, 2002) to discern the strength and limitations of pastoral theology for the context of a mass shooting.

### Significance of the Study

The significance of the study is two-fold. First, this study will fill an empirical gap in the social sciences and practical and pastoral theology by providing data on pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting. Second, this study will reconstruct a theology of care for the context of a mass shooting.

### The Research Questions

The research questions seek to explore what pastoral caregivers experienced in the wake of the Las Vegas mass shooting, paying particular attention to what pastoral caregivers did in response to the mass shooting. The questions are listed in Appendix B. It should be noted that the questions were a guide, not a formal commitment to ensuring each question in Appendix B was asked. Privilege and priority was given to following the lead of participants and asking questions in terms of what they shared. The research questions served as a general orientation, or entry point, to try and discern and learn what pastoral caregivers experienced in the wake of the mass shooting.

### Rationale for Methodology

A hermeneutic phenomenological method was employed because the focus was first and foremost on lived experiences. Second, this method is appropriate because of the fundamental belief that any aspect of my social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), can be “bracketed” in and

through the research process (Browning, 2010, p. 40; Langdridge, 2007). As Browning (2010) suggests, the sum of a person's biases, dispositions, or beliefs *can be* a part of the interpretation process (Swinton & Mowatt, 2016, p. 58). I would take this a step farther and say the sum of a person's biases, dispositions, and beliefs *should be* a part of the interpretation because they already are in qualitative research.

In this study, I will diverge from Husserl's transcendental phenomenology and pursue the developmental trajectories of hermeneutic phenomenology (Spinelli, 2005; van Manen, 2007), landing specifically in the arena of van Manen (1997) who privileges and prioritizes critical reflexivity and Gadamer's hermeneutic circle (Gadamer, 1975). As I have already stated in my introduction, what led me to the study of a mass shooting was a retrospective inquiry of my own lived experience, having a close friend whose father and girlfriend were shot and killed on October 1, 2017. Retrospective reflection and reflexivity embody the belief that I am a part of the interpretive process, and my own consciousness is not something that should be, or can be, bracketed. This embodies a postpositivist, social constructionist view of the world and supports the rationale for a hermeneutic phenomenological design.

### Research Design

Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling method. Bailey (1996) suggests a benefit of this method is that participants can then provide local information that can inform the principal investigator of other participants who have also experienced the same phenomenon. Following the practice of ethical research, I distributed informed consent forms, that were signed before the study began (Kvale, 1996) and did not use any form of deception. Following Bailey's (1996, pp. 10-12) recommendation, the informed consent form included the following: agreement to participate in the study, the purpose of the study, the procedures of the study, risk

and benefits, their ability to withdraw at any time for any reason, and methods used to uphold participant confidentiality (Kvale, 1996).

Creswell's (1998) recommendations were followed and 12 participants were initially recruited to meet data saturation (p. 113). To be expected, there was an attrition of participants, which is why Creswell (1998) recommends recruiting sufficient participants to meet data saturation. Initially, 12 participants were recruited for participation and 3 did not respond to confirm the initial interview when the principal investigator arrived in Las Vegas and 2 notified the principal investigator of withdrawal before the beginning of the study.

The interview followed Kvale's (1996) suggestion there should be a connection between the central research question and the interview questions. The central research question and sub-questions can be found in Appendix B. Kvale (1996) suggests that interviews are the exchange of views between people. The goal of the interview, then, was to understand and interpret the participant's experiences from the participant's perspective. Since this is a focus, priority, and commitment, I chose a semi-structured questionnaire and employed a method of *free imaginative variation* (Kleiman, 2004) to generate new questions within the interview. Free imaginative variation draws upon *imaginative variation* (Moustakas, 1994) to change the frame of reference, and approaches participant responses and interpretations from different perspectives to generate new questions (pp. 97-98).

Data, including audio recordings, transcripts, and four types of field notes (observational memos, theoretical memos, methodological memos, and analytical memos), were stored in a locked box in the principal investigator's place of current residence. Since the principal investigator traveled to their research site, a locked box was brought from their home to the

research location. Participant data was organized into files to include: the informed consent form, notes taken during the interview, field notes, notes, drawings, or diagrams given to the researcher with permission, and any additional data provided by the participant that may include resources, pamphlets, or weblinks. Furthermore, notes generated during data analysis, data analysis drafts given to the participants for validation purposes, notes surrounding confirmation or disconfirmation, plus participant comments about the data analysis from the first interview, and all additional communication between the principal investigator and participant were kept in the locked box.

Data analysis followed three processes: open coding, axial coding, and selective coding. First, participant interviews were read in their entirety. Next, transcripts were re-read and data was categorized into units of meaning or themes. Once meaningful units were generated, similar units were combined or integrated. These units were subjected to free imaginative variation (Kleiman, 2004) to determine which emerging themes were essential to the research question. Transcripts were reviewed, as needed, to justify, verify, or nullify emergent themes. In addition, during a second hour-long interview, findings were validated via the research participant.

#### Definition of Terms

Annotated definitions of key terms are listed below.

***Anger toward God.*** People may consider themselves to be in a relationship with a deity. As such, people may become angry with a deity for similar reasons they would become angry with others. In particular, individuals may become angry with God in response to negative life circumstances or events (Exline & Grubbs, 2011). Anger toward God is considered a type of spiritual struggle, *interpersonal struggle* (Exline, 2013; Exline & Rose, 2013). Exline et al.

(2011) have shown that people may become angry toward God when one is unable to find meaning, when one scores low on a measure of commitment to a relationship with God, when one perceives God to be responsible for intense harm, and/or when one views God's intentions as cruel.

**Conundrum.** A conundrum is a practical theological concept defined by Miller-McLemore and Mercer (2016) to describe any phenomenon that "defy easy answers." Conundrums can create confusion, complexity, and a lack of coherence that may "entangle" the practical or pastoral theologian and encroach topics that "do not easily exhaust themselves." Conundrums require "honesty, self-reflexivity, and professional risk" because they invite the practical and pastoral theologian into the "lived quagmires" that "reflect social inequalities and political injustice." To address or resolve a conundrum, a broad scholarly academic community *must be* engaged and invited into the (mutually critical) collaborative conversation to "scavenge" or scour any and all places for truth. Ultimately, conundrums are about "raising consciousness" (p. 2-5).

**Essence.** A universal construct or stand by which all instances are compared (Merleau-Ponty (1962).

**Imaginative variation.** A method in data analysis that occurs after phenomenological reduction. This tool varies the frame of reference by employing divergent perspectives, alternate roles, functions, or positions, or polarities to an experience that is being explored (Moustakas, 1994).

**Lived experience.** Pre-reflective experiences related to one's experiences of specific events (Giorgi, 1997; Giorgi & Giorgi, 2003).

***Mass shooting.*** A mass shooting will be defined by Wilson's (2017) conception of a mass shooting which they break into two words, "mass," and "shooting." The word "mass" is defined as a, "large amount or number of something," and "shooting" is defined as "a firearm that has been used to kill or injure victims" (p. 3). Bjelopera et al. (2013) suggest that a mass shooting includes four or more indiscriminately selected victims. The scope of this definition does not include other forms of violence such as gang-related violence, homicides, robberies, or suicides (Wilson, 2017, p.3). A mass shooting is differentiated from racism and police brutality (Chaney & Robertson, 2013) and fatal shootings of unarmed people of color (Chaney & Robertson, 2015).

***Practical theology.*** In my view, practical theology is a living entity and a social identity, not merely a discipline. It is comprised of scholars who are both similar *and* distinct. Since practical theology is as much a social identity as it is a living entity, the definition of practical theology is socially constructed between the practitioner and their context. The practical theologian privileges and prioritizes lived experience over and against religious dogma, and seeks to navigate the tension between what is already known about God, self, others, and the world around them, and what is continuing to be revealed. Therefore, the definition of practical theology is continually unfolding and taking shape. Practical theology depends more upon *who* the practical theologian is, and the complexity of their social identity, instead of some static superordinate identity.

***Pastoral theology.*** Pastoral theology is a sub-discipline of practical theology that pertains to, in the words of Bidwell (personal communication, November, 1, 2020), "the theoretical foundation for practices of pastoral care and counseling."

**Pastoral care and counseling.** Pastoral care and counseling refer to the theory and practical of pastoral care. Pastoral care and counseling are an integrative mode of care because it incorporates aspects, to varying degrees, of the practitioner's religious or spiritual history, heritage, and commitments. In this distinct field of pastoral theology, care and counseling focuses on the tools and techniques rooted in particular theoretical and theological approaches. Pastoral theology emphasizes the role and importance of professional ethics, since pastoral care and counseling, in parish ministry, is *not* practiced with a professional license. As such, there are professional, ethical, and legal distinctions in the scope and limitations of pastoral care and counseling. Pastoral care and counseling can take the forms of or be informed by: spiritually-oriented psychotherapy (Sperry & Shafranske, 2005), spiritually-integrated psychotherapy (Pargament, 2007), Christian counseling (Collins, 2007; McMinn, 2007, 2008; Worthington et al., 2013), and integrative approaches to psychology and Christianity (Carter & Narramore, 1979; Entwistle, 2004, 2010, 2015; Sandage & Brown, 2018), and pastoral care and counseling (Doehring, 2015; Kollar, 1997; Lartey, 2003; Lester, 1995; Neuger, 2001; Townsend, 2009).

**Phenomenology.** Phenomenology is an evolution of philosophical phenomenology to a methodology that is used for qualitative research. Langridge (2007) describes a methodology as a means to research a topic. This is different from a method which is simply a tool or technique being employed within the process of inquiry. Phenomenology, as a research methodology, seeks to describe the lived experience of research participants by identifying and isolating themes. As a part of the research process, one describes and interprets the meaning of a phenomenon (Van Manen, 1997).

**Phenomenon.** An occurrence, event, or experience that can be observed (Van Manen, 1990).

***Spiritual struggle.*** Religious or spiritual struggle is a phenomenon where negative thoughts or emotions become associated with religious or spiritual experiences, practices, or beliefs (Exline, 2013). There are six types of religious or spiritual struggle, and two focus on beliefs about supernatural forces: *divine struggle*, which focuses on negative emotions or conflict regarding beliefs about a deity or relationship with a deity, and *demonic struggle*, the belief or concern that Satan or a harmful spirit is creating or causing negative life events. *Interpersonal struggle* relates to negative relational experiences or negative experiences with a religion, religious institution, or religious persons. There are three types of *intrapersonal struggle*, which relate religious or spiritual struggle to one's own actions or thoughts. Here, one can experience *struggle around ultimate meaning*, difficulty regarding a lack of existential meaning; *doubt-related struggle*, struggle that relates to doubts about their religious or spiritual beliefs; or *moral struggle*, struggle surrounding one's attempt to live up to a moral code or ethic or the guilt or shame they experience for failing to live up to a moral standard (Exline, 2013; Exline et al., 2014; Exline & Rose, 2013).

***Theology of the cross.*** A theology of the cross is a way of seeing the world that acknowledges the limits of its own vision and its need for other viewpoints (Root, 2014). A theology of the cross influences *who* and *what* a person chooses to see and attends to the less glamorous aspects of life like suffering, social issues, chronic illness, systemic problems, and marginalized peoples (Solberg, 1997; Thompson, 2004). This mode of seeing acknowledges the complexity of life, people, systems, and suffering without grasping for structured, closed, and certain worldviews that seek to reduce and essentialize experience or reality. In this, a theology of the cross is an action that leads a person deeper into the world, incarnationally, to bear with and remain with those who struggle and suffer. It leaves a person with the everyday ordinariness

of life that is, at times, unremarkable (Hall, 2003). A theology of the cross does not despair and is inherently a theology of hope because it proclaims God's solidarity in, with, and under the struggle, suffering, and the everyday ordinariness of life (Moltmann, 1974). Therefore, a theology of the cross always take its shape in relation to person(s) and context(s) (Hall, 2003, p. 51; Madsen, 2007, Location No. 6424).

***Transversal/Transversality.*** Transversality is a realist perspective that prioritizes ontological realism. This position supposes there are real things in the world that exist outside of the human mind. Transversality finds value in interdisciplinary conversations because the position assumes that the epistemological limits of a discipline provide only a part of what can be known. This position presupposes reality is more than a discipline, person, group of persons, or system can know by itself. Therefore, transversality posits there is no locale in which an individual, group, or discipline can fully possess reality. Thus, it is stated that interdisciplinarity is always needed (Root, 2014, pp. 286-287).

***Trauma.*** Trauma is any event or experience that overwhelms and limits one's ability to cope (Herman, 1997, p. 33).

***Trauma theology.*** The theological discipline devoted to the study of and care for persons who have experienced trauma. This can be wide-ranging to include theory, care practices, and empirical research.

***Terror management theory.*** A theory derived from Greenberg, Solomon, and Pyszczynski (1986). The theory empirical shows that people are psychologically motivated to avoid thoughts about death. People seek self-preservation and they are sentient beings, aware of the world around them. Therefore, when people become aware of their mortality this generates

the potential for paralyzing terror. TMT, rooted in both social and evolutionary psychology, suggests that people have developed psychological structures that have evolved to help people consciously or unconsciously manage the terror of death awareness (mortality salience). The theory suggests that people can either adopt a cultural worldview or seek to boost self-esteem to defend against thoughts about death. The benefit of a cultural worldview is that it provides structured, closed, and certain views about the world. Psychologically, this produces a sense of meaning, permanence, and order. This is the foundation on which an individual can then construct their own personal values or standards. Self-esteem is derived by believing or bolstering one's belief in a cultural worldview *and* living by the norms, rules, or expectations of their group. Therefore, validating or affirming one's worldview *and* living according to one's cultural norms reduces anxiety associated with death awareness. For a comprehensive reading of the history and contemporary trajectories of TMT, see Harvell and Nisbett's (2016) *Denying Death*.

**Uncertainty-identity theory.** Uncertainty-identity theory is related to the uncertainty reduction hypothesis (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). The uncertainty reduction hypothesis states that people are psychologically motivated to reduce uncertainty. In terms of one's social identity, the uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2011) suggests that people avoid and dislike feelings of self-uncertainty, uncertainty about who they are or how they should behave. When individuals experience self-uncertainty, they will be psychologically motivated to self-categorize (Turner et al., 1987), or clarify their sense of identity. To do this, Turner et al. (1987) and Haslam et al. (1995) discuss the concept of prototypicality, the degree and extent to which an in-group member fits the "prototype" of an in-group member. While there are many benefits associated with prototypicality (Hogg, 2001; Hogg et al., 2012), especially in leadership

positions (Abrams et al., 2008; Van Knippenberg & Van Knippenberg, 2005), a primary benefit of conformity to a group's set of standards or "prototypical" member is that it reduces self-uncertainty.

### Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions, limitations, and delimitations are an integral aspect of a research design. It is assumed that there will be variability in pastoral caregiver experiences in future studies conducted outside of the Las Vegas, Nevada, context. Future studies in different geographic locations may examine, explore, or engage different variables like religious culture based upon geography and context, faith-based differences in participant demographics, and other social-cultural influences. To understand the complexity and nuance of a mass shooting, more research is needed on pastoral caregiver and victim experiences of a mass shooting by geographic location. It would also be beneficial to understand and interpret social and personal factors such as race, class, gender, socio-economic status, social support network, personality, spiritual maturity, education, clinical experience, attachment to God, and images of God to understand how people experience a mass shooting and the factors that influence how they respond.

*Assumptions* can be both known and unknown. Therefore, assumptions may influence any aspect of data collection or the findings of the study. It is assumed that participants responded to the interview questions honestly. It could be, however, that participants did not feel comfortable responding to the interview questions or the researcher, and the answers may not have fully addressed the research question. The relationship between the researcher and the participant is important and will impact whether or not a participant feels comfortable with the researcher. During the interview, every effort was employed to establish respect and rapport throughout the interview process. Here, empathy, curiosity, compassion, concern, authenticity,

genuineness, and allowing sufficient time and space for the participant to respond to, think, reflect, and/or sit in silence were used to facilitate open and honest responses to the interview questions.

There are assumptions that are foundational to this research study. It is assumed that the participants in this study responded to the research questions openly, honestly, and to the best of their ability. It is assumed that the study accurately gathered, analyzed, and summarized participant data and reflects pastoral caregiver experiences of the mass shooting in Las Vegas, Nevada.

Participants were given full disclosure regarding the role and responsibility of the research participant, what will be requested of them, and other information regarding confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were informed that they could withdraw from the research study at any time and their interview data would be deleted.

*Limitations* reflect possible flaws in the study that may exist beyond the control of the researcher (Maxwell, 2013). Participants who identified as pastoral caregivers were invited to participate in this study.

The study was limited to pastoral caregivers in the proximal vicinity of the Las Vegas, Nevada, mass shooting. Initially, participants were recruited using a snowball sampling technique in the geographic location of Las Vegas, Nevada. However, this changed when a research participant was referred and recruited from Southern California. It is uncertain to what degree or extent the findings of this research study can be generalized to pastoral caregivers of another geographic location. There is a limitation with the data sources in this study. The research relied heavily upon research participants to arrive on the date of their interview, since

the principal investigator traveled from out of the state to conduct interviews. There was one participant who did not complete their second interview due to a scheduling conflict. In addition, no participant volunteered to participate in a focus group at the completion of the individual interviews. The focus group was intended to be a data source to triangulate with interviews and validate emergent themes. The possibility of bias was a risk for the researcher who is a pastoral caregiver and clinical intern who has similar educational, social, and vocational histories.

*Delimitations* identify limitations of a research study (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Delimitations include variables that cannot be avoided in order to delimit the scope of the research study. The researcher delimited the study to participants in a proximal geographic area to include Las Vegas, Nevada, and Southern California. The delimited sampling of participants helped the researcher complete the study in a reasonable amount of time.

#### Summary and Organization of the Remainder of the Study

Chapter 2 presents a review of current research on the phenomenon of a mass shooting, paying particular attention to the gap in the research for both the social sciences and practical and pastoral theology. Chapter 3 describes the methodology, research design, and procedures for this study. Chapter 4 will provide a written summary of the results. Chapter 5 will explore participant wisdom to suggest a new function of care: witnessing. Witnessing will be described in terms of bearing (Hunsinger, 2015) and remaining (Rambo, 2010). This function of care will be situated within a pastoral theology of the cross (Thornton, 2002).

Chapter 6 will summarize the results of the study, discuss the results, and present a conclusion based on the transversal interdisciplinary mutual critical conversation. Findings will

be compared with extant theories and published literature. Limitations, implications, and directions for future research will be discussed.

The final section will present the references. Appendices will follow the references.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### Introduction to the Chapter and Background to the Problem

The purpose of this study is to explore the lived experiences of pastoral caregivers from the Las Vegas, Nevada, mass shooting. Specifically, this study seeks to describe what pastors experienced and describe what they did in response to the mass shooting, paying particular attention to what worked well, what did not work so well, and what they would do or recommend be done (differently) in a future context of a mass shooting.

It remains unseen what tools, techniques, or approaches to care are more helpful, which are less helpful, and if there are any approaches to care that are unhelpful. The dearth of publications on the topic of pastoral caregiver experiences of and responses to a mass shooting reveal a gap in the literature in both the social sciences and practical and pastoral theology.

### Identification of the Gap

Pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting reflect a gap in the research in both the social sciences and practical and pastoral theology. In the social sciences, there are no published research studies that have explored pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting. The most closely associated topic is San Ramon's (2019) study of religious support in the wake of a mass shooting. The study is a first of its kind because it examines religion and spirituality in the wake of a mass shooting. The results of the study indicate religious and spiritual support protect against spiritual struggle, depression, and posttraumatic stress symptoms. The study is beneficial for a number of reasons. First and foremost, the study provides a short overview of psychological symptoms victims experience in the wake of a mass shooting. The ripple effects go beyond the victim and affect the victim's friends and family, the entire community, and first responders. Emotional responses can include disbelief, horror, and fear. Clinical symptoms included

posttraumatic stress disorder, acute stress disorder, anxiety, or depression. In addition, exposure increased the likelihood mental health issues, complicated or prolonged grief, and substance use or abuse.

Brown and Matusitz (2019) published a study that employed speech act therapy as a method for analyzing sermons delivered by pastors in the wake of the Charleston shooting. The study found several emergent themes across the sermons delivered by the pastors: race, anger, threats, forgiveness, God/faith, justice, and prayer. They described what pastors did in response to the mass shooting in Charleston, North Carolina, highlighting their encouragement of spiritual resources such as forgiveness and love. This study identifies what pastors did from the pulpit but it does not describe what pastors experienced or how they provided care.

In theological literature, most publications address trauma (Jones, 2019) and/or disaster (Graham, 2006; Johannessen-Henry, 2016; Krause et al., 2017). Under the umbrella of trauma and disaster are specific disciplines and approaches of study which include public theology and trauma (Arel & Rambo, 2018), feminist trauma theology (O'Donnell, 2019; O'Donnell & Cross, 2020), multidisciplinary perspectives of trauma (Barker, 2019; Walsh, 2017), practical theology and trauma (Warner et al. 2019), and pastoral theology and trauma (Park, 2017; Rambo, 2010; Swain, 2011; Thornton, 2002; Tietje, 2018; Hunsinger, 2015; Worringer, 2018). Despite the extensive study of trauma and disaster, there are no studies that have specifically addressed the phenomenon a mass shooting. Additional research is needed to explore pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting to understand and interpret what pastors do, what works well, what doesn't work well, and what pastors in future contexts of a mass shooting can do (differently).

Wilson (2017) acknowledges the limits of defining the psychological effects of a mass shooting in terms of PTSD. Defining psychopathological outcomes only in terms of PTSD limits the conceptual understanding of the clinician or researcher because experiences and symptoms may not be uniquely captured by the “monotonic” conception of PTSD (pp. 13-14). Additional research on victim experiences of a mass shooting can broaden the scope and definition of psychological responses to a mass shooting and, in turn, develop the clinical conception of victim symptomatology. Further research is needed to explore and describe victim experiences of a mass shooting.

### Conceptual Model

Lee (2010) employs the kitchen as a theoretical framework for multicultural counseling. I want to draw on this image and situate it in the theoretical foundation of social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979) to describe the conceptual framework for this dissertation.

Practical and pastoral theology are like a kitchen. The kitchen is a dynamic and ever-changing place that always stands in service to those who have come to the kitchen. Hospitality is an orienting ethic and guiding principle for everything that happens in the kitchen. Within the kitchen, there is a multiplicity of players, some of whom take on multiple and dynamic roles and responsibilities. The kitchen can, and does, change when the situation or social context changes. For example, cultural shifts may produce cultural trends that will influence what people want or need. Therefore, the food or the way food is prepared may change based upon changes in culture.

As such, the people of the kitchen need to be keenly aware of what is going on outside the kitchen so that deep listening, watching, observing, ethnography even (Moschella, 2015), can facilitate empathy, intuition, and responsive practices in the kitchen (Ramsay, 1998). In addition,

the kitchen is a place where all members of society are capable of participating. To reference the philosophy of the Disney/Pixar movie, *Ratatouille*, “Anyone can cook!” (Bird, 2007). This means that wisdom, tools, and resources can come from anyone and anywhere, not just practical theology or psychology. As Miller-McLemore and Mercer (2016) say, practical theologians are “scavengers looking for truths in many places” (p. 5).

A great leader of a great kitchen will have an open eye for talent, refusing traditional epistemologies that might otherwise limit *who* can be or become a part of the kitchen, *what* can or cannot be prepared in the kitchen, and *how* something should or should not be prepared in the kitchen. The conceptual model of this dissertation puts forth the practical theological activity that seeks to “build bridges, make portages, and see connections where others have missed them” and seek unlikely “alliances and partnerships” because the focus is on “relationality and community” (pp. 19-20). The frame of this dissertation believes that the wave of the future depends upon “lay participation,” or those who are outside of normative traditions, structures, and institutions of the kitchen (Miller-McLemore & Mercer, 2016, p. 19-20).

As a scavenger and a border-crosser, one who gives priority and focus to bridge-building, alliance-making, and “seeing connections where others have missed them,” my conceptual framework is cross-disciplinary, (Van Der Ven, 1998), interdisciplinary, and multidisciplinary (Root, 2009).

The kitchen, though it may work well in expanding the conceptual notion of a cosmopolitan ontology and metaphysic (Kang, 2013), lacks particularity and nuance to conceptualize the multiplicity (Crisp & Hewstone, 2000), hybridity (Crisp & Hewstone, 2001), and complexity (Rocca & Brewer, 2002) of the social identity of those in the kitchen. Here,

social identity theory is helpful because it creates a flexible framework for *who* is in the kitchen, not limiting them to traditional, nomothetic, or ideographic standards. The kitchen is the guiding image and philosophical framework that will support and justify the transversal interdisciplinary mutual critical conversation of Chapter 5 (Root, 2014; Pattison, 1989). The roles, responsibilities, and individuals in the kitchen will work together as a team to have a conversation about a mass shooting, from their different perspectives. The outcome of this conversation will stand in service to those who come to the kitchen to be fed. In my assessment, the patrons will be pastoral caregivers seeking insights and living wisdom about pastoral care in the context of a mass shooting.

#### Review of the Literature

For this study I will provide a literature review of the social sciences first, paying particular attention to mass shooting research published in the psychological sciences. Next, I will provide a literature review of practical and pastoral theology, looking to theological literature that addresses or explores the phenomenon of a mass shooting.

An initial search was conducted across three primary research databases, EBSCO, Eric, and H.W. Humanities. EBSCO databases include PsychArticles, PsychBooks, and PsychInfo. H.W. Humanities included Humanities Full Text and Social Sciences Full Text. Initial results returned nearly 1,500 results which included 460 from academic journals, 431 from journals, 115 magazine articles, 54 books, 49 dissertations, 37 reports, 8 reviews, and 5 trade publications.

Research results were organized into relevant categories to include: coping (Littleton et al., 2011; Littleton et al., 2009; Palus et al., 2012; Reddy et al., 2015), mental health and mental illness (Budenz et al., 2019; DeFoster & Swalve, 2018; Draucker, 2020; Hammarlund et al.,

2019; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Olufowote & Matusitz, 2016), shootings by geographic location (DiLeo et al., 2018; Fast, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2007; Littleton et al., 2011; Littleton et al., 2009; Palus et al., 2012; Ramirez et al., 2018; Stults et al., 2017; Vito et al., 2018), school shootings (DiLeo et al., 2018; Katsiyannis et al., 2018; Muschert, 2007), media psychology and social media usage (Cassidy et al., 2018; Hoffner et al., 2017; McGinty et al., 2014; Meindl & Ivy, 2017; Wilson, 2014), religion and spirituality (Brown & Matusitz, 2019; San Roman et al., 2019; Merceir et al., 2018), and treatment (Wusik & Jones, 2015).

Within the *Wiley Handbook of the Psychology of a Mass shooting* (Wilson, 2017), the extant literature was organized among similar categories to include: empirical issues, theoretical approaches, psychological perspectives to understand the shooter, media psychology, mental health, clinical interventions, and prevention and ethics. The strength of Wilson's (2017) handbook is that she parses apart the difficult questions that explore the operational distinctions between traditional definitions of gun violence, where homicide occurs, and a mass shooting, where traditional definitions include the shooting and death of more than four people. Alluding to a context in Baltimore, Maryland, Wilson (2017) suggests that instances where 4 or more individuals are shot are qualitatively different than other instances of a mass shooting like Parkland, Colorado, Orlando, Florida, or Las Vegas, Nevada (p. 389).

In addition, Wilson (2017) also parses the clinical and psychopathological distinctions between traditional definitions of posttraumatic stress to suggest that posttraumatic stress from a mass shooting may not fully conceptualize the unique experiences and symptoms of victims. She suggests that extant criteria for PTSD lack the nuance and qualitative particularities to capture the lived experiences of survivors of a mass shooting, which builds into her empirical critique of the study of a mass shooting.

A limitation to Wilson's (2017) psychology of a mass shooting occurs in two areas: intersectional psychology and psychology of religion and spirituality. In terms of assessment and social perception of a mass shooting, intersectionality matters. Cole (2009) might agree that people perceive pain, suffering, and the significance of an event based upon race, class, gender, socio-economic status, and sexual orientation. Positive biases, like the halo effect, might positively skew perceptions of the significance and severity of a mass shooting based upon the intersectionality of the perpetrator(s) or victim(s). For example, in psychological literature in persuasion and influence, authority, with a sub-feature of physical attractiveness, biases perceptions of bad behavior. Ritts, Patterson, and Tubbs (1992) found that physically attractive children's actions were rated as "less naughty" when the subject was physically attractive, compared to their less physically attractive counterparts. Therefore, how we perceive the outcome (harm) of an event, and its moral value (evil), has to do with the intersections of the perpetrator(s) and/or victim(s). That being said, Wilson (2017) speaks from a clinical psychological, not a social psychological or clinical-social psychological perspective. Therefore, I would not expect them to consider social factors moderating psychological conceptions of the shooter(s) or victim(s) and how this can bias perceptions of a mass shooting.

Alternatively, health psychologists have found disparities in medical treatment based upon race. For example, Hoffman et al. (2016) suggests that people rate the pain of minority group members as less significant and less severe than majority group members. The treatment pathway and prescription drugs differ significantly, then, on the basis of race. This is important because public perception may evaluate a mass shooting in a minority group demographic differently than a majority group demographic.

In terms of public perception of the significance and severity of a mass shooting, it stands to reason, then, that intersectional cues might influence the public perception of significance, severity, and discourse of a mass shooting based upon the intersectionality of either or both the perpetrator(s) and the victim(s). For example, it seems that there might be a qualitative distinction in the public perception of the mass shooting of Virginia Tech compared to the Sandy Hook school shooting. There could even be a possible perceptual difference, by way of authority and stereotype, between Virginia Tech and Umpqua Community College. Despite this limitation, Wilson's (2017) handbook provides a comprehensive overview for the psychological study of a mass shooting, laying the empirical foundations for theory and research.

San Roman et al. (2019) and Brown and Matusitz (2019) fill the empirical gap in the psychology of religion and spirituality of a mass shooting that explores the role of religion and spirituality in the wake of a mass shooting. San Ramon et al. (2019) suggest that religious and spiritual support protected individuals from the experience of spiritual struggle, depressive symptoms, and posttraumatic symptoms. A nuance of the study is that it explores a concept called *resource loss* as a part of their hypothesis. Here, researchers predicted that individuals who experience resource loss, referring to tangible resources like food, water, or shelter, or interpersonal resources like connection to family, social support, or a sense of control, would fare worse than individuals who did not experience resource loss (Littleton et al., 2009, 2011). As a part of their study, they define religious support as feeling or being connected to the divine, other members of the religious community, and a sense of belonging and the ability to persevere through religious support (San Ramon et al., 2019).

A primary limitation to this study is that it examines indirect victims of the Umpqua Community College shooting, or victims who were not present at the time of the mass shooting.

In addition, it lacks lived religious narrative of what religious support actually looks like in the aftermath of a mass shooting versus what it is reported to be. Furthermore, there is a limitation with the sample population. Primarily middle-age, broadly Christian males were recruited and sampled for this study. There were questions as to whether or not indirect victims should respond, and there was a methodological issue with participation and responses. Since the victims were not directly involved with the mass shooting, this may explain why fewer individuals participated in the study. There is not enough evidence to determine whether or not indirect victims experienced similar, different, or same experiences as direct victims. Furthermore, it is plausible that direct victims might have a fundamentally different psychological experience than those who indirectly experienced the mass shooting. Last, the context is different. This study explored religious and spiritual variables in a school context and this study will explore pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting in Las Vegas at a concert.

A second study explored psychological variables of religious practice, focusing on what pastors say in their sermons after a mass shooting. Brown and Matusitz (2019) explored pastor's sermons in the aftermath of the Charleston church shooting. Speech Act Therapy was employed to analyze pastor sermons in response to the mass shooting to understand how religious leaders influence and persuade parishioners to respond. Emergent themes from Brown and Matusitz included: forgiveness, prayer, God/faith, race, anger, justice, and threats. Their study suggests that pastors within this study encouraged their congregation to confront race, racism, and injustice by responding with faith, forgiveness, and the love of God.

While Brown and Matusitz (2019) study is rich in lived religious experience, and even explores how pastors respond to a mass shooting, the most glaring methodological issue is that a

methods section is missing from the publication itself. As a part of this methodological caveat, there is an issue of sampling. First, the methods for sampling were not discussed in the publication and it is unclear what, if any, were the delimitations of sampling. In addition, a qualitative distinction needs to be addressed between participants in the study who were: a megachurch pastor (Rick Warren and Louie Giglio) and a “normal” pastor, a professor-pastor (Lancaster Theological Seminary and Luther Seminary), and to what degree and extent the pastors in the study were connected the Charleston Church Shooting. The study does not clarify what the relationship between any of the pastors are to the Charleston church shooting.

Given that this publication occurs in media and communications, it is surprising that they did not address the qualitative differences between a megachurch pastor, like Rick Warren or Louie Giglio, and other pastors included in the study, especially since part of the research focused on the degree and extent to which the pastor was able to inspire or motivate positive change, that is, how words can translate into actions. It seems that a professor or a megachurch pastor may be more influential, based on studies in authority, compliance, influence, power, and leadership (Burger, 2009; Fiske, 1993; French & Raven, 1959; Heath et al., 1994; Hogg, 2010; Milgram, 1963; Raven, 1992).

### Practical and Pastoral Theology

There are three associated publications that explore trauma and pastoral care that should be considered in a literature review of pastoral care for the context of a mass shooting. Warner et al. (2019) provides the most comprehensive publication in practical theology. Their focus centers on the exploration of Christian practices in the wake of tragedy and trauma. Warner et al. (2019) provides a dynamic perspective that combines empirical practical theology and theological reflection on practice that culminate in the fifth part of the book which provides four extensive

chapters devoted to the construction of pastoral resources. A particular highlight of this publication is Wiebe's conceptual contribution which expands the framework of trauma to its collective nature (Warner et al., 2019), a work that Jones (2019) included in the second edition of her book, *Trauma and Grace: Theology for a Ruptured World*. This is a significant contribution because most works neglect the collective nature of care in the wake of tragedy, trauma, or disaster. Yet, despite this comprehensive and dynamic edition to practical and pastoral theology, the phenomenon of a mass shooting is only nominally observed throughout the book, receiving two mentions in the entire work (Warner et al., 2019, pp. 75, 275).

In a more praxis-oriented publication, Krause et al. (2017) provide a non-academic, but clinically-focused resource, for pastoral caregivers. The book concentrates on two tasks of practical theology, the descriptive-empirical task and the pragmatic task. The authors provide rich and thick descriptions of the lived experiences of people who face disaster. In addition, Krause et al. (2017) provide a praxis-oriented response to disaster and discuss, describe, and organize extensive pastoral resources that can sustain pastors and help ministry to move forward in the wake of a disaster. Although this book is highly nuanced, and an essential resource for any clinical or non-clinical pastoral caregiver, a mass shooting is nominally discussed throughout the book (pp. 1, 14, 31, 35, 45, 104).

Similar to Krause et al. (2017), Johnson (2020) provides an empirically-integrated pastoral engagement of trauma. Like Krause et al. (2017), Johnson (2020) focuses on the lived experiences of victims of community-based trauma. Specifically, Johnson traces the trajectories of lived experiences across the first day, the first week, the first month, the first year, and beyond, to then discuss the nature, role, and practice of providing comfort. The highlight of Johnson's (2020) publication is that it provides, to varying degrees, rich descriptions of a broad

spectrum of victim experiences of trauma. Johnson's rich reflection and engagement develops the imagination of pastoral caregivers that equip them to construct and facilitate care practices specifically geared towards comforting people in and through traumatic experiences. Yet, despite this wonderful contribution to the literature in pastoral care, the phenomenon of a mass shooting is not incorporated into the practice of pastoral care. The term Johnson (2020) uses is, "mass fatalities" (pp. 90, 98-99).

Graham (2006) addresses pastoral theology and catastrophic disaster. The inspiration for the publication stands on the shoulders of the Columbine shooting, which is mentioned in the introduction of the article. Graham continues to address the nature and nuances of catastrophic disaster, but does not differentiate or discuss trauma, or provide a framework for trauma, in relationship to catastrophic disaster. While a mass shooting is discussed nominally, it is not addressed specifically and no attention is given to the lived experiences of pastoral caregivers in the wake of a mass shooting. The article, however, provides an insightful and reflective response to catastrophic disaster that focuses on the role of lament and the practice of redeveloping hope in the wake of disaster. Here, Graham (2006) takes a narrative-based approach to hope to outline the specific ways that victims of disaster can reclaim control over their (faith-based) story to help sustain and guide victims through catastrophic disaster.

### Summary

Practical and pastoral theology face an academic issue when it comes to the study of a mass shooting. First, there is an empirical gap in the research. To date, there are no published studies in either the social sciences or practical and pastoral theology that examine or explore pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting. Second, Wilson (2017) insightfully articulates a clinical issue within the psychological framework of traumatology. It is clinically and

empirically uncertain whether the traditional framework for trauma is valid for victim symptomatology of a mass shooting. Wilson (2017), throughout her comprehensive work in the psychological study of a mass shooting, articulates quantitative nuances of the phenomenon of a mass shooting. Despite the comprehensive contribution of her work, she does not include psychological research from the sub-field of religion and spirituality in her research review. Therefore, it remains unclear what the role of religion and spirituality might be, could be, and if there are any extant studies that have been conducted or are currently being conducted. This dissertation will address the empirical gap in the literature by providing a phenomenological study of pastoral caregiver experiences and provide a pastoral theological approach to care. The following chapter will discuss and describe the research design and protocols for the study.

### Chapter 3: Methodology

#### Introduction

This chapter includes a statement of the research problem, research questions, methods, and research design. Population and sample selection, trustworthiness, data collection and management, analysis procedures, and ethical considerations will also be discussed.

#### Statement of the Problem

To date, there are no published studies that have explored pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting. Research in the psychological sciences have begun to generate an extensive amount of research on the phenomenon of a mass shooting (Wilson, 2017), examining variables like coping (Littleton et al., 2011; Littleton et al., 2009; Palus et al., 2012), mental health (Frazier et al., 2016; Hawes, 2019; San Roman et al., 2019), media psychology (Budenz et al., 2019; Dahmen et al., 2018, 2019; Hoffner et al., 2017; Jang, 2019; Jones et al., 2016; Miller, 2015; Silva & Capellan, 2019; Steeves & da Costa, 2017), intervention (Budenz et al., 2019; DiLeo et al., 2018; Lanza et al., 2018; Williamson et al., 2014), clinical profiles of the shooter (Allely & Faccini, 2019; Hammarlund et al., 2019), and the role of religion and spirituality in the wake of a mass shooting (Frazier et al., 2016; Hawes, 2019; San Roman et al., 2019). Yet, to date, no studies have specifically explored what pastoral caregivers experience in the wake of a mass shooting.

The fields of practical and pastoral theology have begun to discuss the phenomenon of a mass shooting. However, the topic and conversation is typically situated under the umbrella of disaster and/or trauma; a mass shooting is not addressed specifically. Johnson, (2020), Krause et al. (2017), Graham (2006), and Warner et al. (2019) are the four most relevant publications to the study of a mass shooting. All four publications nominally discuss a mass shooting and do not

address the phenomenon specifically. All publications situate the phenomenon of a mass shooting into the categories of disaster and/or trauma.

### Research Question

The question, emanating from the empirical gap in the literature, is, “What do pastoral caregivers experience in the wake of a mass shooting?” The purpose of this study is to explore and interpret what pastoral caregivers experience in the wake of a mass shooting. There is one primary research question and there are four secondary and supporting research questions. These questions were adapted from the semi-structured questions in Appendix B. The research questions for this study are:

RQ 1: What did pastoral caregivers in the Las Vegas context experience in the wake of the mass shooting?

SRQ 1: What did pastoral caregivers do in response to the Las Vegas mass shooting?

SRQ 2: Were there responses that were more helpful?

SRQ 3: Were there responses that were less helpful?

SRQ 4: What suggestions or recommendations would pastoral caregivers who provided care in the context the Las Vegas mass shooting give to pastors in a future context of a mass shooting?

Participants were invited to two, one-hour, individual, semi-structured interviews. The principal investigator developed an interview protocol (Patton, 2002) that employed the use of open-ended interview questions (see Appendix B). An interview method of free imaginative

variation (Kleiman, 2004) was employed to determine if emerging participant data was relevant to the research question. This method was used to keep the researcher on task and oriented to the initial research questions.

### Research Methodology and Design

A qualitative methodology for this practical theological study was chosen over a quantitative methodology because of the nature of the research question. The research question seeks to describe and interpret the lived experiences of pastoral caregivers in the wake of a mass shooting. Therefore, a phenomenological method of research was chosen from among the five approaches to qualitative inquiry. The terms, “describe,” “interpret,” and “experiences of” describe and justify phenomenology as a method over and against alternative approaches qualitative inquiry. These descriptors also embody the goals of phenomenological inquiry. In contrast to narrative research, which concerns itself with collecting stories *about* lived experience, a phenomenological method is committed to describing and interpreting the lived experience as told by the one who has experienced the event itself (Creswell, 2013). This also stands in contrast to grounded theory because of the outcome of qualitative inquiry. In grounded theory, the goal of research is to generate a theory out of participant’s lived experiences.

Ethnography differs from phenomenological research in its scope of inquiry. While phenomenology is focused on a limited number of participants (Creswell, 2013; Polkinghorn, 1989), ethnography concerns itself with lived experiences within culture(s) and people groups (Moschella, 2008). Narrowing the scope of inquiry, a case study concerns itself with a limited number of individuals, or cases. In contrast to ethnography, which seeks to understand the complex characteristics and relationships within a culture or a people group, a case study is

concerned with the particularities of a specific case. Due to the nature of the research question, a phenomenological approach to inquiry was the most appropriate for this study.

Within phenomenological inquiry, there are two approaches to qualitative inquiry: transcendental and hermeneutic. Husserl, who is considered the founder of transcendental phenomenology (Strasser, 1965), suggests phenomenology is a foundational science for all other sciences. Hermeneutic phenomenology would agree that sensations can be both actively and passively apperceived, thinking in terms of Wundt's creative synthesis and Stuart Mill Jr.'s mental chemistry (Hergenhahn, 2009). This casts significant doubt that a sensation, speaking in terms of Wundt, could ever be isolated apart from one's apperception of a sensation. This calls into question whether or not an apperception, whether an active or a passive process, can be reduced to what Husserl called, "pure phenomenology."

In an attempt to reduce an apperception to its constituent parts, Husserl employed a method of epoché, or "bracketing." Bracketing is a process in which all apperceptions are set aside so that the sensation of the event or experience could be studied "freshly as if for the first time" (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 34, 85). To deconstruct apperceptions, imaginative variation could be used to trace the "infinite multiplicities" of creative synthesis, or mental chemistry, to interpret the essence of a phenomenon, though Husserl would disagree with my use of the word "interpretation" (Husserl, 1977, p. 63); Husserl would use the term "introspection" on the active mind and mental process of what Wundt called, "creative synthesis," because this would deduce the pure essence of what Husserl called, "pure phenomenology" (Hergenhahn, 2009, pp. 267-268, 281-282).

Martin Heidegger, a student of Husserl, was a phenomenologist but diverged from transcendental phenomenology to develop existential phenomenology. Existential phenomenology diverges in a number of significant ways. First, whereas Husserl was focused on individual experiences, Heidegger was interested in a much larger scope that included all of human existence. Second, Heidegger employed the term *Dasein* to suggest a person and the world are inseparable; *Da* “there” and *sein* “to be”. This relates to the term *Lebenswelt*, which describes the relationship between a person and the world as “being-in-the-world.” Combined, these terms addressed what is commonly known as “there-being” (Hergenhahn, 2009, p. 574). Thus, descriptions of a phenomenon, or words, can only intimate or point towards a fundamental reality (Van Manen, 1990). Interpreting this fundamental reality embedded in words, for Heidegger, reflects *Lebenswelt* or “being-in-the-world.” Third, for Heidegger, existence was a complex and dynamic process, humans are not static, but “always becoming something other than what they were” (Hergenhahn, 2009, p. 574). Therefore, Heidegger recognized that a phenomenon can lead to multiple interpretations whereas Husserl believed pure phenomenology would be essentialized to one (Hein & Austin, 2001). Fourth, Heidegger suggests apperception occurs as an a priori process. In other words, prior experience is used to interpret new experiences, which depicts his “hermeneutics of existence” (Heidegger, 1962).

Ultimately, Heidegger believed that understanding is a reciprocal activity that is best described in his “hermeneutical circle.” Gadamer developed the method of hermeneutics in phenomenology in a way that more clearly bridged the subjective-objective divide (Dowling, 2007). While Husserlian transcendental phenomenology would argue for a bracketing of one’s experiences, Gadamer suggests the two should be integrated into what he calls a “fusion of horizons” (Swinton & Mowatt, 2016, pp. 105-110). The fusion of horizons, for Gadamer, occurs

through dialogue. In empirical research, Gadamerian hermeneutics goes a step farther and initial findings are brought back to the participant for additional conversation (Dowling, 2007).

This study will employ a practical theological approach to phenomenological research. Practical theology offers a particular approach to qualitative inquiry (Swinton & Mowatt, 2016) in the same way that nursing science (Speziale & Carpenter, 2010), education (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), and social work (Padgett, 2017) offer distinct approaches to phenomenological research. Therefore, this study is, and is not, merely a religious enterprise but an actual approach to qualitative inquiry with its own distinct commitments, techniques, tools, and core values.

First, there is not a normative method for doing practical theology (Miller-McLemore, 2012a). The practical theological method arises more out of the social identity of the practical theologian than a particular methodology. For it is *out of* one's social identity that one practices practical theology. Second, practical theology pays particular attention to practice, as it is oriented to the performance of faith. It is not given to theological abstractions that are often divorced from lived praxis (Browning, 2010, p. 8). Instead, practical theology seeks to enter into "conundrums" that "entangle" and press upon "raw spots" (Miller-McLemore & Mercer 2016, p. 2-5). Practical theology seeks "rich and thick" descriptions that are complex and "illuminating" (Swinton & Mowatt, 2016, pp. v, 13, 45). It is both a descriptive and an interpretive approach and seeks to discern, "What is going on?", "What is going wrong?", "What should be going on?", and "What can be done?" (Osmer, 2008, p. 4). While practical theology may be seen within the spectrum of religious studies, I present a way of viewing practical theology as a theological science and suggest that it *can* be categorized as a sub-discipline of the social sciences as a particular approach to inquiry. This statement is not made to make any type of disciplinary claim about *what* practical theology is or is not. Instead, this statement is made to

categorically include and expand the conception of approaches to qualitative inquiry. In addition, I do this to provide a resource for graduate students so they can have the awareness that there are multiple disciplinary ways to approach phenomenological research and each has its own unique methods, tools, assumptions, and qualities.

In terms of qualitative research, I assume, with Don Browning (2010), that “theory is embedded in practice” (p. 9). This mirrors van Manen’s (2007) phenomenology of practice, which will guide the overall hermeneutic phenomenological approach to the research study. Both Browning (2010) and van Manen (2007) would agree that while theory “thinks” practice “grasps”. Put another way, there is a difference between knowing something and understanding something. While theory thinks, and may understand something outside of experience, practice is an embodied way of knowing and understanding what theory “thinks”. To use the words of Chaplain 1, C1, “...no one can ever train for something like this, you have to experience it.” What C1 is saying is that experience imparts a different type of knowing. Applied to this dissertation, this study seeks to draw on two types of phenomenon: that which can be articulated and that which is pathic, or pre-verbal, pre-reflective, and pre-theoretical (van Manen, 2007).

#### Population, Sample Selection, and Data Collection

Bailey (1996) suggests that snowball sampling can be a helpful method of participant recruitment that relies on local information of participants to identify others who have had a similar experience of the same phenomenon. Following this approach, participants were recruited utilizing a snowball sampling method. Informed consent forms were distributed to participants (Kvale, 1996) who brought signed copies to the first interview. Following Bailey’s (1996, p. 10-12) recommendation, the informed consent form included an agreement to participate in the study, the purpose of the study, the procedures of the study, the risks and

benefits of participating in the study, a notification of participant freedom to withdraw at any time, without penalty, and methods used to uphold participant confidentiality (Kvale, 1996).

According to standard recommendations for a phenomenological study (Creswell, 1998, p. 113), 11 participants were recruited for the study to ensure data saturation. There was an attrition rate of 5 participants who, upon being recruited for the study either did not follow up with the researcher or did not arrive at the scheduled interview. Polkinghorn (1989) suggests that between 5-25 participants be recruited within a research design to meet data saturation while Creswell (2013) recommends between 3-15 participants be recruited for data saturation (p. 78). In light of these recommendations, no additional participants were recruited since the number of participants recruited were sufficient to meet data saturation.

All participants were ages 18 years old or older. Based on their self-report, in the participant recruitment process, all participants indicated that they had provided direct care to direct victims of the mass shooting. One participant held a clinical and professional license beyond graduate training in pastoral care. One participant held a doctoral degree in pastoral psychotherapy. All participants were ordained within a mainline Christian denomination (Episcopal, Baptist, ELCA-Lutheran, and Pentecostal). While participants were not required to share their personal histories of trauma, many participants did. This included childhood abuse, the life-threatening illness of a loved one, and the sudden death of a loved one.

All participants, except one, were located in the Las Vegas context that included the cities of Henderson, Summerlin, Spring Valley, and Paradise. One participant was located in Huntington Beach, California. Participants were either ordained clergy or board-certified chaplains. One participant was a licensed therapist. Participants in the study were male (100%, *n*

= 7/7) and Caucasian (100%,  $n = 7/7$ ). All participants indicated that they were US-born (100%,  $n = 7/7$ ). All participants were native English speakers (100%,  $n = 7/7$ ). Participants ranged in age from 38-82 with a mean age of 46 years.

Research questions and interview questions were prepared in light of Kvale's (1996) recommendation that there be a connection between the central research question and the sub-questions (Appendix B). A method of free imaginative variation (Kleiman, 2004) was employed to generate questions within the interview to discern and interpret how emerging data related to the lived experience of pastoral caregivers. This method is based on Husserl's method of reduction to derive a pure phenomenology. Applied to participant interviews, the principal investigator generated quotes to probe and play with participant responses to freely imagine different scenarios that might change the texture of a participant response (Moustakas, 1994). The new response was then collated with previous responses to search for essential themes or other emergent themes.

The primary method of data collection was in-depth, semi-structured interviews that consisted of 7 questions and 3 sub-questions (see Appendix B). The amended questionnaire consisted of 1 research question and 4 sub-research questions.

Interviews were scheduled two-weeks apart. This was intentional to give participants time in between interviews to think, reflect, and process. Participants were told that they could contact the principal investigator at any time for any reason via cell phone or email to provide additional thoughts or reflections. Participants were also encouraged to journal or take notes on thoughts, ideas, or insights that may arise in between interviews. Participants did not keep journals or take notes, but five participants indicated that they had spent time in between

interviews thinking about the research questions and things that they had learned from the Las Vegas mass shooting.

Beyond participant interviews, four types of field notes were recorded to include observational memos, theoretical memos, methodological memos, and analytical memos. Observational memos depict *what happened* during the interview (Bailey, 1996). Theoretical memos were my interpretations of what I experienced in the interview. Methodological memos were written instructions, critiques, or reminders for data analysis. Analytical memos described what had been accomplished at the end of any research segment. In this study, I generated analytical memos at the end of each day to summarize what I had done and the data that was collected.

Data was stored in accordance to Creswell's (2013) recommendations. Here, data was backed up, second copies were produced, and all sensitive materials were coded to eliminate identifiable markers related to participant identity. In participant interviews, there were no points during data collection that a participant requested shared information be "off the record."

Interview data was collected through audio-recorded, individual, and in-person interviews. The range of the interview duration was 36 to 85 minutes, with the average duration of 67 minutes. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed for the study and employed to organize and direct the structure and time of the interview. Participants, however, were allowed to guide the discussion throughout the interview. Privilege and priority was given to attending to participant questions, comments, and reflections over the interview protocol. The principal investigator recorded four types of field notes that included observational notes, theoretical notes, methodological notes, and analytical memos. The notes and memos were

recorded in a journal after each interview. The average time spent journaling after each interview was 37 minutes. These field notes provided supplemental data and also served to validate emergent themes in subsequent participant interviews. Notes and memos generated during and after the interview were shared with participants for validation purposes. Participant comments to the notes and memos were included in the interview transcriptions. To protect participant confidentiality and privacy, transcribed notes and audio recordings saved to a computer were given pseudonyms to replace the names of the participants. The principal investigator followed Poland's (1995) recommendations to include transcription codes to record interruptions to dialogue, pauses, laughter, and other non-verbal responses during the interviews. All participant data was kept in a locked box in the home of the principal investigator. Since the principal investigator was traveling, staying with a friend, it was requested that a key to the room was provided only to the principal investigator and no individual was allowed in the room with the locked box. Recordings were deleted at the end of the study.

### Explication of Data

The term, "data analysis" was changed to "explication of the data" based on the recommendation from Hycner (1999) who suggests the word, "analysis," can produce issues for phenomenological inquiry. Hycner (1999) says that the term, "analysis" can carry "Gestaltic implications" that may study constituent aspects of a phenomenon but not the phenomenon itself. Alternatively, "explication of the data" indicates that both, the constituent parts as well as the whole phenomenon, are explored (p. 161).

After transcribing participant interviews, I employed the method of exploration of Smith et al. (2009) in which I, (1) read each participant interview and then re-read each participant interview; (2) generated initial notes in response to reading and re-reading participant interviews;

(3) generated emergent themes; (4) explored the connections between emergent themes; (5) explore patterns between all cases (pp. 82-107).

### Initial Exploration

The first step in data exploration was to generate a pathic knowledge of participant experiences (van Manen, 2007). To do this, I read and re-read participant interviews without taking notes. My goal was to allow pre-verbal, pre-theoretical, and pre-reflective aspects of the interview arise to the surface of consciousness. This approach was used to prioritize *what is felt* over *what is thought*. This process helped me to both sympathize and empathize with participant interviews in a non-cognitive mode of knowing. Then, I began to take notes on the pathic knowledge that was coming up between me and the text, writing down initial thoughts and observations while paying particular attention to descriptions and interpretations of participant responses. This process emphasized a goal of research, which is to produce “rich and thick” descriptions of a phenomenon (Swinton & Mowatt, 2016, p. 45). Here, I generated an excel spreadsheet consisting of three rows for each participant interviewed. In the table, the first row described the emergent theme that described the participant comment; the second row consisted of the actual participant comment; the third row is where I placed exploratory comments.

During the initial exploration, I also appropriated and employed Bidwell’s (2004) tools of *learned ignorance, curiosity, and a stance of unknowing* to suspend my own interpretations of participant data with a hermeneutic of suspicion, mutually critically conversing (Pattison, 1989) what I interpreted with what I saw. While I do not believe the full aspect of my social identity could be “bracketed” in the transcendental phenomenological sense, through critical reflexivity (Swinton & Mowatt, 2016, p. 56-63), I worked to suspend my interpretations and hold them in tension with my hunches.

### Within-Case Exploration

This initial technique facilitated the next step in data exploration: generating themes from participant data. The goal in this step is to accentuate insights from participant interviews according to themes. I employed free imaginative variation (Kleiman, 2004) to play with emergent themes to explore and re-explore possible meanings and interpretations, comparing participant data within the case as a whole. Then, I prepared for the next phase of exploration by examining emergent themes to see if they were present between cases.

### Between-Case Exploration

At this point, I generated another row within my excel spreadsheet to identify superordinate and sub-ordinate themes between participants. The file from the previous analysis was saved and I labeled the developing data set as “combined themes.” The focus of this step was to explore connections between cases to look for similarities across themes and sub-themes. This refined and reduced my list of themes and sub-themes so that I was able to identify a final set of themes and categorical descriptors. Participant’s lived experiences of a mass shooting were retained in the within-case exploration and textured meanings were combined to describe and interpret pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting from the between-case exploration.

### Trustworthiness

In quantitative research, the aim of an empirical study is to produce results that are both valid and reliable. Validity, including both internal validity and external validity, describe the degree and extent to which the principal investigator accurately examines that which they set out to study (internal validity) and that their findings can be generalized to a particular population (external validity). Reliability refers to the degree to which findings from the study can be

replicated. For example, if a research study generates significant findings but the findings cannot be replicated then a study is considered to have low reliability.

In qualitative research, researchers employ different tools to address validity or reliability. Qualitative researchers use terms and techniques like triangulation, peer review, negative case analysis, clarifying researcher bias, member checking, rich and thick descriptions, and external audits (Creswell, 2013, pp. 251-252). A major method of generating reliability is the use of intercoder agreement. Here, multiple researchers will analyze transcript data and generate independent codes. Codes are then compared to see if there is intercoder similarity. If there is, then reliability is said to be achieved.

To ensure validity and reliability of the findings, I utilized a high-quality recorder for my interviews. I transcribed data the day of or the day after the interview, and I double-checked all recordings to ensure the transcriptions were accurate; and this included transcribing pauses and other non-verbal responses or utterances. Then, after transcribing notes and generating initial codes, I verified what was said by participants in a second one-hour interview and verified initial findings for accuracy. Verification with participants in the second interview was done to ensure accuracy of the principal investigator's interpretation of the data. This confirmed that the researcher accurately understood and interpreted what participants had shared during the first interview.

In addition, I followed the framework of Lincoln and Guba (1985) to enhance the *credibility* of this study. During participant interviews, I consistently checked for misunderstandings by asking participants, "Have I understood what you have said correctly?" In terms of *dependability*, interrater exploration was not conducted because it was not explicitly

stated in the informed consent form that participants were agreeing to allow external auditors read and study participant data. This is a limitation of the research design.

Analytical memos were compiled and re-evaluated as a tool for *confirmability*.

Confirmability is the extent to which researcher neutrality can be presumed and findings can be reported as free from researcher interest, bias, or motivation. Triangulation of participant data was employed in a within-participant method. Here, participant data points were compared within the interview to explore consistency of emergent themes. The most significant tool of confirmability was reflexivity. Reflexivity is a “mode of knowing that accepts the impossibility of the researcher standing outside of the research field and seeks to incorporate that knowledge creatively and effectively” (Swinton & Mowatt, 2016, p. 57).

*Transferability* is the degree to which findings in one context can be said to be valid in other contexts. The term, “thick” description was first employed by Ryle (1949) and later developed by Geertz (1973) as a part of their work in symbolic anthropology. It should be noted that Lincoln and Guba (1985) disagree that findings may be developed merely by a “thick” description but instead suggest that something must “thickly described.” Therefore, this is confirmed to be transferable because “rich and thick” descriptions of participant experiences were generated (Swinton & Mowatt, 2016, p. 45).

### Ethical Considerations

All site visits were deemed ethical as the principal investigator had first emailed a file containing the informed consent form and participants were notified that they may withdraw or discontinue with the study at any point, for any reason, and their data would be excluded and appropriately dissolved. Site visits at the participants place of work were scheduled at least two-

weeks in advance of the actual interview. The researcher arrived at least 10-minutes before the interview and promptly ended the session at the agreed upon 1-hour limit. Participants were asked permission to go beyond the 1-hour limit in interviews that went over 1-hour. The principal investigator was respectful as a guest at the participant's host location and sought to build, establish, and maintain respect and rapport in a professional manner before, during, and after the interview. Participants were given the email address and cell phone number of the principal investigator and the principal investigator's advisor in case questions, comments, or concerns arose throughout the research process.

## Chapter 4: Results

### Introduction

This chapter will explicate the data by describing the emergent themes of this study.

Emergent themes of this study include: trauma, limits, meaning-making, ministry of presence, and help. Sub-themes will be discussed and diagrams will be provided in the section to follow.

This chapter will also address the limitations and delimitations of the study and conclude with a summary. The purpose of this phenomenological study was to explore the lived experiences of 7 pastoral caregivers in the wake of the Las Vegas mass shooting. The participants included one Lutheran pastor, one Episcopal priest, one licensed therapist, who is also an ordained Episcopal priest, three chaplains, and one Lutheran pastor who provided care for victims in a Southern California context. Open-ended, semi-structured questions were used during the face-to-face interviews with all participants to explore the lived experiences of pastoral caregivers. Open-ended questions allowed participants to describe their lived experiences in rich detail. The data was analyzed to identify emergent themes of pastoral caregiver experiences of the Las Vegas mass shooting.

### Explication of the Data

Pastoral caregiver's experienced trauma, vicarious trauma, and tremendous suffering in the wake of the Las Vegas mass shooting. Across care situations, participants were consistently asked questions that sought to make sense out of the tragedy like, "Why would God allow this?", "Why would anyone do this?", and "How could this have happened?" Pastoral caregivers turned to their training, past experiences, and "trusted their gut" as they responded to the needs that emerged in the wake of the Las Vegas mass shooting. Pastoral caregivers were self-aware and careful to acknowledge their limits within their role as a pastoral caregiver and honest in the

assessment of the limitations of what they could do to respond and help. This means that pastoral caregivers did not attempt to care for clinically significant symptoms that they did not have the training for and they referred care seekers to other professionals when and where it was appropriate. In addition, pastoral caregivers were honest in their assessment about the scope of their impact, recognizing that there was “nothing I could do or say to make things better.” Acknowledging their limits, pastoral caregivers powerfully offered a ministry of presence to bear the suffering and remain with the victims in the dust and ashes of their trauma. In the wake of the mass shooting, pastoral caregivers witnessed “people come out of the woodwork” to help. People hotwired trucks, used their vehicles as an ambulance, restaurants in the area donated food, and they witnessed people around the nation send blankets, gift baskets, and monetary donations to support victims and first responders.

### Thematic Results

Data analysis began by reading the transcripts repeatedly. The first analysis of the transcripts was completed without notes, pen, paper, or any comments. The second analysis was conducted with a pen and notes, underlining, and highlights were made to the hard copy transcripts. Open codes were generated and organized into an excel spreadsheet. The third analysis examined the transcripts for disconfirming evidence for open codes. The fourth analysis explored the relationship between codes and organized codes into themes. Thematic results provided 5 emergent themes of pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting: trauma, limits,

Table 1

*Emergent Themes*

Theme	Sub-themes	
Trauma	Participant	Care Seeker
Limits		
Meaning-making	Secular	Religious
Ministry of presence		
Help	Non-religious	Religious

meaning-making, ministry of presence, and help. Table 1, displays the emergent themes and sub-themes of the study.

*Theme 1: Trauma.* Trauma was an emotional dimension of pastoral caregiver experiences that emerged from participant descriptions of the Las Vegas mass shooting. The experience of trauma can be organized into two sub-themes: participant trauma and care seeker trauma. Only C1 described trauma as a personal experience in the Las Vegas mass shooting. C1 responded to the question, “Do you think you experienced secondary trauma?”, by saying, “Yes, absolutely I did.” This was significant for C1 because they said, “I never have nightmares.” C1 described the experience as being “very difficult” causing them to feel “jittery and on edge”.

C2 did not describe trauma or secondary trauma as a personal experience but shared something that indicates caring for victims had a significant impact on them. C2’s wife said, “my wife left me alone, she says, ‘You don’t know how you look when you come back.’” C3 indicated a similar experience and said they “spend an hour or two on the couch to unwind”. For C2 and C3, although they did not use the word, “trauma,” caregiving was significant enough to

produce physical and behavioral changes that others were able to observe. A limitation of this theme is that pastoral caregivers were not directly asked if they had experienced trauma.

Outside of personal experiences, all participants used the word, “trauma”, to describe the Las Vegas mass shooting. P1 described a pastoral care situation where their parishioner said, “...he was letting us know how traumatic it is when there is a mass shooting.” P2 said, “...this was so big and it was so traumatic.” For P2, the trauma of the mass shooting was marked by the event being “...beyond our ability to cope.” C1 nuanced the trauma of a mass shooting, differentiating the experience from other traumatic experiences by comparing it to the trauma of war saying, “...combat medics don’t see this kind of trauma.” C1’s colleague was injured by skull fractures of a person in front of her who had been shot in the head. C1 described the effect this experienced had on her because “she left” her job and was experiencing “grief and depression.”

T1 explains the nuanced trauma of the mass shooting because,

“...that had occurred at their place of business, a place they felt comfortable...their home away from home. Not only did the tragedy happen there, then the security measures that were in place and security animals and check points, virtually changing over night while still coping with the broken glass, the crime scene across the street, the large police presence, the curtains flowing in the wind, it was all overwhelming.”

The uniqueness of the trauma was described by P2 who shared a story of a parishioner who “...was a single mom, she was convinced she was going to die so she’s crawling on the floor calling her kids thinking she’s going to be killed, horrible things that she saw...” This is unique for a number of reasons. First, when people face death, they may not live to talk about it. Second, when people face death, they typically are unable to reach out to others in an attempt to either

share what they are currently facing or to say, “goodbye.” In addition, this complicates the trauma because it has the capacity to produce vicarious trauma for the people who are called. The uniqueness of the trauma was captured in another story P2 shared. P2 described a woman who,

“...got dropped off at a Wal-Mart and people were climbing over this fence and she walks in and nobody knows the shooting has happened and it’s almost like a horror movie, she comes in, she’s frantic, and people go, ‘Is everything okay?’ And she says, ‘There was a huge shooting over at the hotel,’ and he says, ‘No there wasn’t’ because he Googled it.”

This experience is significant. When people or groups of people do not believe the victim of a trauma or tragedy it can suppress, delay, disenfranchise, or compound the trauma of the event. This is significant because C2 said, “...for many this was the most traumatic situation they had been in in their lives.” If the mass shooting was the most traumatic situation a victim has been through in their life, and people do not believe them or do not know it has happened, how can victims begin to cope? Where does this leave victims?

C2 described a patient visit where he had to “grab hold of this girl to let her know she was safe.” C2 said he had to help reassure this girl “...to let them know they’re not in that traumatic situation; just to let them know that they’re safe and they’re in a safe situation.” For some victims, the disorientation and trauma were so significant they were unable to recognize they were safe and in a secure location. P3 described a care situation where a young boy “cried in my arms for nearly 10-minutes.” C3 described the unique trauma patients faced that night by describing a care situation where a doctor called them to come care for a young man who was with his wife in the hallway entrance of the hospital. The young man was distraught because “he

felt the doctors were ignoring his wife.” The doctors had determined the wife had sustained a fatal shot to the head and she would not survive. The husband, however, felt that the doctors were ignoring them and not caring for her. Pastoral caregivers came face-to-face with the traumatic experiences of others. For some, this occurred the night of the shooting. For others, this happened in the days, months, and weeks after the mass shooting.

*Theme 2: Limits.* All participants described the limits of their role and responsibility as pastoral caregivers in the wake of the mass shooting. P1 differentiated their role with the role of a psychiatrist and a psychologist saying, “All I can do is give you communion wine and that’s not going to be enough.” In the words of P3, the magnitude of the event could not be fixed with communion. Put another way, P1 said, “other tools are required.” However, P1 was very clear that they possessed “some tools” but not every tool saying a pastor “doesn’t have to be good at everything.” P1 recognized that some individuals might need medication or clinical therapy and said, “I can’t do that.” For P1, pastoral care in the wake of a mass shooting was about “Knowing your limits” and recognizing that a pastor “doesn’t have to be good at everything.” P1 elaborated by providing an image of a Jiffy Lube service center. P1 indicated that they can “provide counseling” but “if they need an engine overhaul” individuals would need to go to another shop. P1 indicate that their role could provide pastoral counseling, not therapy. If individuals needed something they could not provide, then they would need to “go to someone who had a bigger tool box.”

P2 agreed with P1 and said,

“So, you have to be aware of your humanity...where you say, ‘I’m not the person who can help you,’ and that’s what I said to many of them, ‘I can’t help you long term, I can

accompany you and we can talk about how you're doing,' but you have to acknowledge your limitations. That's the necessary part of it."

P3 agreed with P1 and P2 and said,

"One of my maxims is, 'I don't provide ongoing counseling,' I'm not trained for that and that's not what priests and pastors are in this for so we do general assessment, we do spiritual counseling and advice, but when I determine someone needs more than I'm able to give then I refer them to someone else."

T1 agreed with P1, P2, and P3 but discussed their limitations from a multidisciplinary perspective as a licensed therapist and an ordained minister saying, "I'm in both fields, I treat things very differently and I encourage the treatment of things very differently." T1 indicate that if a patient begins asking questions related to theology or religiosity then they will "refer to someone who specializes in that." For T1, care was about "recognizing the conflict" of one's roles and providing professional practice by only doing the work that is defined within their role. Alternatively, T1 addressed the limits of care from a pastoral perspective as well. They indicated that if they were caring for a victim and they began sharing clinically significant symptoms then they would "refer to someone who specializes and works in that area."

C1 agreed with P1, P2, P3 and T1 in knowing one's limits but situated limits in terms of "remembering your training" and working within a multidisciplinary care context. C1 shared a story about two chaplains who were instructed by doctors to refrain from telling family members of the deceased that they had died until grief counselors could arrive. C1 said, "One of the chaplains was specifically told not to tell the family that their person has died, the doctor has to tell them." C1 went on to say,

“The doctor wasn’t there yet and the TIP, trauma intervention people, haven’t had a chance to get to the room yet, the family is broken down, and they’re crushed and now they have a million other questions that the chaplain isn’t in a position to answer and the doctor gets there and there is pandemonium in the room and the doctor has to calm these people down.”

C2 agreed with C1, P1, P2, P3, and T1 but discussed their limits in terms of, “...knowing what is and isn’t my job.” C2 said, “Our job is not to counsel our job is to listen and support and comfort and provide prayer.”

Participants were clear about their role and responsibilities as pastoral care providers. Their roles and responsibilities were discussed in terms of the magnitude of the event, recognizing that they may not have the tools or resources to help a care seeker with what they were experiencing. A part of their role, however, was to refer their care seekers to individuals who were “equipped” to help them with what they were experiencing.

*Theme 3: Meaning-making.* All participants described the request or need to help care seekers make sense of the mass shooting. Meaning-making took on two dimensions: secular meaning-making and religious meaning-making. The most frequent secular meaning-making question was, “Why?” Care seekers wanted to understand “Why someone would do something like this?” Second, care seekers sought religious meaning frequently asking, “Why God would allow this?” or “Where was God?” when the mass shooting took place.

P1 described the general request to help individuals make sense of the event in terms of frequent questions care seekers would ask. P1 said individuals asked them, ““Whose fault is this?”” P1 described this as a general question. P1 also described questions related to survivor’s guilt like, “Why wasn’t I hit?” and “Why was so and so hit?” P2 agreed with P1 and said that a

question that seems to haunt the present centers on the reality of meaningless suffering. P2 went on to describe the Las Vegas mass shooting as, “maddening” because “there wasn’t a clear ideological motive.” P2 said, “people don’t know why he did this. That is what is remarkable about this act, there was no clear motive.” If there had been a clear motive this may have helped people to make sense of the mass shooting. However, since there was not a clear motive for the shooting it complicated the grief and suffering of the victims.

P3 agreed with P1 and P2 saying, “...people always want to know why this happened.” C1 used the word “confusion” to describe people’s responses. C1 said people were “confused how something like this could happen.”

C1, C2, and C3 all described religious dimensions of meaning-making. C1 said, “And the question that came back was, ‘Where was God two hours ago?’” P1 described the questions they received in terms of “Where was/is God?” and P3 described the questions in terms of “Why God would allow this to happen.”

A frequent question across participant descriptions of questions related to meaning-making had to do with *why* God would allow something like this to happen and *where* God was in the midst of and prior to the mass shooting.

*Theme 4: Ministry of presence.* A ministry of presence was used to describe what pastoral caregivers did in response to the mass shooting. It also described their approach to pastoral care in the aftermath of the mass shooting. C1 described a ministry of presence to describe what they did and how they responded to the mass shooting. C1 said, “...that was the main thing that I was doing, my ministry of presence that was the bulk of my ministry, to be there.”

C2 agreed with C1 and said the main thing they did was a “ministry of presence.” Priority was given to “just being there.” The goal, for C2, was to “be understanding” not be “overzealous or pushy.” C3 described the function of a ministry of presence. C3 said,

“I think it helps you to have a better overview but also it helps you to focus on listening not only to the patients and what’s going on around you but also listening to guidance from the Holy Spirit, you know, not words in your head but intuition as you would call it or insights. It makes you more sensitive to the immediate needs, if you’re more panicked and upset you’ll miss opportunities to see where you could give a word of encouragement or just put your arm around someone, as it is appropriate, you will miss that.”

P1 agreed with C3, C2, and C1 saying, “It starts with a ministry of presence.” P3 agreed with P1 saying, “It really comes down to the ministry of presence, simply being the non-anxious presence.” P3 qualified what they meant by a ministry of presence to describe the act of “bearing” saying,

“Bonhoeffer talks about the ministry of bearing, bearing one another’s burdens and I always have the analogy in my mind, those cheerleaders in pyramids, and the base of the pyramids are just people with their arms around each other’s shoulders bearing up the weight of the people above them and that’s the image I view when Bonhoeffer talks about that. We have to bear one another’s burdens. It doesn’t mean we solve them it just means we help them to carry it and be a part of it.”

T1 described their response to the mass shooting saying, “...to be present, simply offering yourself.” T1 described a ministry of presence in terms of patience. T1 said, “Secondly, to that, is to be patient,” because

“...there’s this inclination to go in and have the answers or detail what someone else is experiencing, and how they should cope with it and have it all lined up as opposed to just being and hearing where the person is at and being comfortable in the fact that you don’t have to respond to everything.”

For T1, the role of silence was very important. T1 said, “...your silence is a part of your ministry of presence, and there’s no shortage of people who say that their best response is to, ‘shut up.’” C3 agreed with T1 saying the best response is “shutting up.” C3 said, “I sometimes pray, ‘Lord teach me to keep my mouth.’” C3 described their prayer as asking God to “...show me where I can keep my mouth shut,” because what was important to them was just “listening.”

*Theme 5: Help.* All participants described how people responded to the mass shooting. Participants described the response in terms of *help*. People and groups local to Las Vegas responded by hotwiring cars to take people to the hospital and using their trucks as ambulances. Participants described people shielding others from the barrage of bullets that were pouring out of the 32<sup>nd</sup> story floor. First responders and entire institutions were described for their professionalism, organization, and profound readiness in response to the mass shooting. The theme of help was organized into two sub-themes: non-religious help and religious help. Non-religious help included a wide array of responses like driving people to the hospital, hotwiring a car or truck to transport people, shielding people from bullets, first responders tending to patients, etc. Religious help included prayer, a religious service, or a ministry of presence.

Participants described non-religious help in terms of donations, monetary and material. P1 said, “I bet there were people who had never given a dime in their life that sent in checks.” C3 described the physical resources that were donated, describing care packages that came as far as Hawaii. C1 and C3 described the care packages as consisting of hand-made blankets, coffee,

flowers, and gift cards. P1 described restaurants and food truck owners that would show up to blood banks and make food for everyone donating blood. P3 said, “Everyone really just wanted to do something.” Therefore, whether it was making and donating blankets or creating and giving care packages, “the community rallied together and everyone did something.”

To provide religious help, participants offered prayer. P1 provided care for a family of their parish whose daughter committed suicide after having attended the concert. P1 described sitting with family and waiting for additional family members to arrive at the hospital. P1 said, “We were sitting there and they asked if we could pray”, so we were “praying while we were waiting for family to arrive.” P3 described the community in terms of an eagerness or desperation, “they desperately wanted to do something.” For their community, P3 said people sought to help in two ways, both practically and religiously, asking, “What can we do?” and “How can we pray for this?” For P3, a primary resource their religious community used was the book of common prayer. P3 said, “...we have the book of common prayer and we are a people of the book.” In other words, P3 turned to prayer and prayer resources to lead and guide their church in a collective response. In response to the mass shooting P3, “...led them in an evening-prayer-kind-of-service.” P3 described what they did during the prayer service by sharing, “Having been part of a prayer service, we didn’t turn it into communion, or a churchy kind of thing it was about being in community and being in prayer and that seemed to work for the folks tonight.”

Speaking generally, T1 described the meaningfulness of prayer for their context by saying,

“...they want to grieve, they want to express those emotions, and have an outlet for that and prayer for a lot of people, communal prayer is extraordinarily meaningful for people;

they can get together and they can express what they're feeling and a service or prayer can afford an opportunity for that."

C1 described how prayer was a requested and appropriate response to the needs of their patients saying, "With some families they wanted prayer so we did basic prayer." C1 described the types of prayers that were prayed or requested. Their patients wanted to pray for the prevention of future mass shootings, pray for the victims, and pray for the people responsible. C1 was asked to "...pray this doesn't happen again...", "...pray for everyone affected...", and "...pray for the perpetrator that did this." C1 indicated prayer was often requested, especially with the family members who were at the end-of-life stage with their loved one saying, "...they wanted to have a chaplain there with the family and praying with them."

The need or desire for prayer was described among "random" people. P2 said people they didn't know would stop them in the hall and "...ask for prayer, so I stopped and gave them prayer." C2 said this about prayer, "I did that all night, going around and I would, as required or requested, I would pray with the families and the friends of the patients." C2 indicated that non-religious people would ask for prayer saying, "They needed someone to talk to and just somebody to be calm and many many, at a time like that no matter what their personal belief, they would turn to prayer and so I would offer prayer, when appropriate." C3 indicated they did not need to ask if people needed prayer because, "...they will kind of come to you and they will come to you, 'Will you pray for my uncle?', 'Will you pray for my wife?', and they would request prayer and if they know you're a chaplain you don't always need to find them they will come to you."

### Summary

This study described what pastoral caregivers experienced in the wake of the Las Vegas mass shooting. Pastoral caregivers described their experiences in terms of trauma, limits, meaning-making, a ministry of presence, and help. Trauma was organized into two sub-themes, participant trauma and care seeker trauma; meaning-making was organized into two sub-themes of secular meaning-making and religious meaning-making; help was organized into two sub-themes, non-religious help and religious help. This study described the experiences of a mass shooting and the unique care situations participants were called to.

The following chapter will begin with participant data and highlight pastoral theological conundrums described in Chapter 4. Participant experiences related to death awareness, feelings of vulnerability, situational and self-uncertainty, and spiritual struggle will be presented. Then, the chapter will turn to the historic functions of care to suggest a new function of care is needed for the immediate aftermath of a mass shooting. Here, witnessing will be introduced as a new function of pastoral care (Hunsinger, 2015; Rambo, 2010). A pastoral theology of the cross will be introduced as a helpful framework for situating pastoral care in the context of a mass shooting. In addition, participant data will be used to describe a pastoral theology of the cross and a pastoral theology of glory.

## Chapter 5: Towards a Pastoral Theology of the Cross

### Introduction

Chapter 5 will facilitate a conversation between disciplines to engage participant voices of Chapter 4 to construct a pastoral theology of care for the context of a mass shooting. Psychological theory and pastoral theology will be invited, as consultants, into a transversal interdisciplinary mutual critical conversation, to collaborate with participant wisdom. I will moderate and guide the conversation to see what interdisciplinary wisdom terror management theory, uncertainty-identity theory, and the psychology of spiritual struggle offer pastoral caregivers in terms of the four tasks of practical theology, “What is going on?”, “What is going wrong?”, “What should be going on?”, and “What can be done?” After this conversation, I will turn to pastoral theology to recommend a theology of witnessing and a theology of the cross be incorporated into a pastoral theology of care for the context of a mass shooting. The outcome of this conversation will be the construction of a pastoral theology of the cross for care in the context of a mass shooting.

### Developing a Pathway to Care

Table 2

Theme	Sub-themes	
Trauma	Participant	Care Seeker
Limits		
Meaning-making	Secular	Religious
Ministry of presence		
Help	Non-religious	Religious

Participant data presented five emergent themes: trauma, limits, meaning-making, ministry of presence, and help (shown in Table 2 above). Findings suggest that pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting are traumatizing, both for the victim and potentially the pastoral caregiver. This cannot be said confidently because the interview questions did not ask pastors directly if they experienced trauma. Pastoral caregivers were confronted with the limits of their role as pastoral caregivers and were frequently asked to help participants understand *why* the mass shooting had happened, in terms of both secular and religious meaning-making.

Participants frequently described the magnitude of the event in terms of how this influenced what they did. Some participants experienced uncertainty, not knowing how to respond. P1 said, “seminary didn’t train me for this,” and C1 and C2 both said, “there’s nothing you can do to train for this.” Despite feelings of uncertainty, every participant recommended, for pastors facing a future context of a mass shooting to begin with a ministry of presence. In the words of P3, “get back to the basics...it all starts with a ministry of presence.”

### Creating Snow Tracks for the Journey Ahead

I remember when I was a new counselor and I was beginning to see clients. There were numerous times during a session where a client would say something or the session would get to a point where I wouldn’t know what to say or I wouldn’t know what to do. In some situations, I thought I knew where the session should go or what statements and experiences I should follow or investigate further, but many times I did not know *how* to get there.

Growing up in Minnesota afforded many experiences, primarily involving snow. One sport my parents introduced me to was cross-country skiing. Cross-country skiing is like trying to run somewhere in the snow while wearing skis. It is very difficult and incredibly exhausting,

especially if you are on a new trail and you do not have ski tracks to follow. If you are behind someone else, or skiing on a trail that someone has recently forged, much of the work of cross-country skiing is eliminated because you can place your skis in the ski tracks of the individual(s) that have come before you.

In my experience, clinical care and pastoral care is like cross-country skiing: it is a lot easier to do on a path that has already been prepared. If one is fortunate enough to travel on a pre-developed path then the work of forging one's own path is reduced and it is a lot easier to head in the direction one seeks to go. Pastoral care in the context of a mass shooting is like cross-country skiing. A limited number of paths have been paved. Therefore, there are few "tracks" to follow. This leaves pastoral caregivers in our contemporary context responsible for doing the hard work of paving their own path in the wake of a mass shooting.

The following section will draw from participant wisdom, psychological theory, and pastoral theology to generate "snow tracks" that can facilitate the journey of care by leaving behind a trail to follow. The paths will be forged with terror management theory, uncertainty-identity theory, the psychology of spiritual struggle, theologies of trauma (Hunsinger, 2015; Rambo, 2010) and a pastoral theology of the cross (Thornton, 2002).

### Toward a Transversal Interdisciplinary Mutual Critical Conversation

This section will begin with participant wisdom to develop "ski tracks" to follow in future contexts of a mass shooting. The ski tracks will be developed in three ways. First, participant wisdom will be used to describe a stance and an approach to pastoral care in the wake of a mass shooting. Second, participant experiences will be used to describe the "blizzard", or

experiences, of a mass shooting. Third, psychological theory and pastoral theology will then be consulted to transverse and deepen the snow tracks of participant wisdom and experience.

### A Rationale for Psychological Theory

A question practical and pastoral theologians may have at this point of the dissertation is, “Why is there a need for psychological theory *in addition* to participant data?” Put plainly, psychological theory will provide an additional perspective that will help a pastoral theologian or a pastoral caregiver understand the dynamics that may be at work in the context of a mass shooting. In other words, psychological theory will “thicken and enrich” a pastoral theologian’s or a pastoral caregiver’s assessment of what is or could be going on, at the psychological level, during a mass shooting. It must be stated that *adding to* participant’s lived experiences runs the risk of “colonizing the data.” I will disagree that I am colonizing my data by discussing *how* I am integrating psychological theory with participant data and *why* I am integrating psychological theory with participant experiences.

Without surveying the history of integration between psychology and theology, I want to state that psychological theory *is not needed* for this dissertation. Integrating psychological theory, however, is a way for me to be reflexive, upfront, and honest about the biases that I, as a researcher hold. Since my own biases and predispositions cannot be “bracketed” at any time, integration is a method and an approach to incorporate how I am, and have been, already thinking about the data. Furthermore, *there is significant value* for both the practical theologian and the pastoral theologian because the integration of psychology generates an additional layer of thinking about the phenomenon of a mass shooting that 1) continues the conversation from participant interviews and 2) expands one’s horizons of conceptual knowledge about the phenomenon of a mass shooting.

The four tasks of practical theology help scholar-practitioners learn, interpret, and understand more about human experience and the world(s) they inhabit. Since practical theology is interdisciplinary, cross disciplinary, and multidisciplinary, this means the discipline of practical theology is willing to “scavenge” and “look for truth in many places” (Mercer & Miller-McLemore, 2016, p. 5). As Collins and Mahoney (1981) suggest, *one way* theology can engage the psychological sciences is through a *levels of analysis* approach. Here, qualitative research is one level of analysis and psychological theory provides another level of analysis. The goal of this chapter is to place multiple levels of analysis together so that knowledge of the phenomenon of a mass shooting can be “thickened and enriched.” In addition, this marks a turn from practice to theory. The goal here is to reflect upon pastoral practice with psychological theory to return to a more informed practice.

Therefore, I would argue that I am not going to “colonize” participant experiences with psychological theory. Instead, I am merely shifting the level of analysis to psychological theory to *freely imagine* and explore the phenomenon of a mass shooting. The outcome of this *levels of analysis* approach will thicken and enrich my understanding of the diverse and complex phenomenon of a mass shooting. The end goal of this levels of analysis is to develop a more dynamically informed praxis of care.

### Participant Wisdom and Experiences

All participants when asked “What recommendations would you offer a pastoral caregiver facing a future context of a mass shooting?” responded with, “a ministry of presence.” C1 said to simply, “be there.” T1 emphatically said, “Yes, put that down, a ministry of presence,” in response to the question. C2 and C3 described the “bulk” of their ministry was

simply “being there”. For C3, a ministry of presence helped them to be with their patient but also “be with” their emotions.

P2 described the magnitude of the event, which all participants described, but described it as “beyond coping.” The event was “beyond coping” because it was traumatic. Every participant used the word trauma when describing the Las Vegas mass shooting or sharing stories about care seekers and care situations they encountered. Research on trauma response suggests that traumatic events can elicit a fight, flight, or freeze response (Maack et al., 2015; Perkins & Corr, 2006). More recent conversations have included additional responses to include freight, flag, faint, and fawn as psychophysiological responses to trauma (Schauer & Elberg, 2010; Walker, 2013). Blanchard et al. (2001) articulates the role of fear in this response. Applied to this study, the significance of a ministry of presence, as a pastoral care response, is that it suspends the fight, flight, freeze, freight, flag, faint, or fawn response. There was a care situation that C3 described where a fellow chaplain was unable to “contain their emotions” in response to the mass shooting. C2 described chaplains who react this way as “chickens running around with their heads cut off.”

How does a pastoral caregiver, in the wake of trauma and a mass shooting, keep themselves from running around “like a chicken with their heads cut off”? In the words of C1, a pastoral caregiver could “remember their training.” What C1 is referring to here is the basic pastoral caregiver training that emphasizes the value and role of a “ministry of presence.” The problem, however, is that this directive has not been publicly stated. A ministry of presence is not a prescribed practice for the context of a mass shooting. The gap in the research suggests that there are no prescriptions for how pastoral caregivers should respond or what they should do in the wake of a mass shooting. Therefore, a mass shooting presents an additional layer of difficulty

for the pastoral caregiver. They must manage their “own emotions” in any given care situation, to use the words of P3, and they have to manage the psychophysiological response to trauma “to be present”, in the words of T1.

In the transversal interdisciplinary mutual critical conversation to come, I will interrogate psychological theory to identify and articulate *why* a ministry of presence presents social psychological challenges to the pastoral caregiver in the context of a mass shooting. The following sections will explore terror management theory, uncertainty-identity theory, and the psychology of spiritual struggle to develop pastoral caregiver awareness about lived experiences a pastoral caregiver may face in the context of a mass shooting. The purpose of providing a psychological hermeneutic is to increase pastoral caregiver awareness to the levels of phenomenon that may occur during a mass shooting.

A *levels of analysis* is a term employed in the integration of psychology and theology (Collins & Mahoney, 1981) to describe how scholars and/or practitioners conceptualize psychological theory and theological knowledge. In a *levels of analysis* approach, Collins and Mahoney suggest that psychology is one level of analysis that can be used to understand a person, place, or event. This approach is situated from an evangelical perspective to suggest that “all knowledge is God’s knowledge” (pp. 22-27). This is stated, specifically for the Evangelical who might otherwise reject psychology, in theory or practice, because of stereotypic conceptions that it is a “dark” or “atheistic” field, and therefore it is to be rejected in favor of theological knowledge and biblical wisdom.

My rationale for introducing and discussing a *levels of analysis* approach is to help the reader understand how I am thinking about psychological theory in terms of participant data.

One could argue that I am “colonizing” my data with psychological theory. However, I am employing a transversal interdisciplinary (Root, 2014) and a mutual critical conversation (Pattison, 1989) approach to place psychological theory *in conversation with* participant experiences. This is not to say that the participant data is somehow insufficient or deficient. From the methodological stance of this dissertation, rooted in the hermeneutics of Heidegger, there is a real limit to what people can know, speak of, or be aware of because of *there being*. Therefore, psychological theory is invited to accompany, collaborate, and converse with participant wisdom to “thicken and enrich” a phenomenology of a mass shooting.

In the following section, I will introduce terror management theory (TMT; Greenberg et al., 1986), uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2011), and the psychology of spiritual struggle (Exline, 2013; Exline et al., 2014). After tracing the contours and implications of each theory, I will then briefly clarify and connect each theory to the phenomenon of a mass shooting and this dissertation.

### Terror Management Theory

Terror management theory was developed in the mid-1980's to address the very significant role death played in everyday life. Initially, TMT was developed to study self-esteem. Jeff Greenberg and his colleagues were interested in examining how individuals maintain self-esteem, what role self-esteem plays in people's lives, and ultimately, describe why it is needed. At the development of TMT, self-esteem had widely been thought of as a factor undergirding human motivation. TMT (Greenberg, et al., 1986) has shown that relationships, self-esteem, and cultural worldviews provide a buffer against death-related anxiety or thoughts about death. Support for TMT emerged when Rosenblatt et al. (1989) and Greenberg et al. (1990) conducted two studies that provided empirical support for TMT. In these studies, they explored the

associated role of the mortality salience hypothesis, which hypothesizes cultural worldviews protect an individual against the fear of death. Therefore, explicitly reminding people of their vulnerability and mortality (mortality salience, MS) will increase attachments, worldview defense, and self-esteem. The term attachment is used in connection with Bowlby's (1969, 1973, 1980) attachment theory. Mikulincer et al. (2003) have shown that attachment occurs across a person's life and provides emotional security. In addition to self-esteem and worldview defense, Mikulincer et al. (2004) suggest attachment-bonds mediate mortality salience.

A return to participant interviews reveals pastoral caregivers described behaviors that sought social support, strengthening one's worldview, and self-esteem. C1 was a part of a support group, and discussed the community resource of the Route 91 support group. P3 described parishioners as "craving" social connections saying,

"...when you're in community, praying together and you can hear the words and you can feel the prayers of other people around you and surrounding you, that's a different experience of prayer, especially in times of, when these kinds of things happen we crave companionship."

Strengthening one's worldview is evinced in the emergent theme of meaning-making. Meaning-making, as an emergent theme of this study, reveals pastoral caregivers and victims of the mass shooting sought to make meaning in general, with regards to why the mass shooting happened. Pastoral caregivers and victims also made meaning in a religious or spiritual sense by asking or responding to the question, "Why would God allow this" in the words of P1, or "Where was God?", in the words of P3. As TMT reveals, social support is associated with self-esteem and buffers mortality salience (Pyszczynski et al., 2004). Mikulincer & Shaver (2003) and

Mikulincer et al. (2004) have shown within attachment theory, social support and attachment bonds buffer the effects of MS, or thoughts about death and an awareness of one's mortality and vulnerability. While participants did not use terms like TMT, MS, death awareness, or worldview defense, participants did display behaviors that could be interpreted through the lens, or level of analysis, of TMT and MS. Participant descriptions included seeking social support, seeking close relationships with others, and attempting to make sense (meaning-making) of the mass shooting. This led the principal investigator to believe these theories were latently present in through the lens of another level of analysis.

### Uncertainty-identity Theory

Self-esteem, social bonds, and social support can also be obtained by joining a group (Hogg et al., 2007). In addition, research shows people can form attachments to the group itself (Prentice et al., 1994). One could argue that the bond is identity-based but Prentice et al. (1994) have shown that individuals can form a common-identity by being a part of a group as well as a common-bond, that is attachment-based. Being a part of a group offers many psychological benefits, including protection against uncertainty. Hogg (2000, 2007, 2011) has shown that one reason why people join groups, especially groups that are highly entitative (Hogg et al., 2007), is to reduce uncertainty. Another benefit of a group, according to Landau et al. (2004), is cognitive structure. In terms of TMT, Landau et al. (2004) suggests that groups provide clear, coherent, and structured worldviews that buffer worldview threats. Given that people cannot consider all possible interpretations of all available information, having a structured worldview provides a sense of structure, certainty, closure, safety, and security. But what happens when people are made to feel uncertain?

Michael Hogg developed uncertainty-identity theory to explore how uncertainty affects group behavior and identity processes. As a student of both Henri Tajfel and John Turner, who created social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), Hogg went on to develop uncertainty-identity theory to examine how uncertainty impacts identity processes and group behavior. Uncertainty-identity theory shows people mediate uncertainty by joining groups (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2011), especially groups that are highly entitative (Hogg et al., 2007). An entitative group is one in which there is a clear internal structure, common goals, common fate, and similarity (Lickel et al., 2000). Essentially, uncertainty-identity theory posits three positions: people are motivated to reduce self-uncertainty, identifying with a group reduces uncertainty, and entitative groups, with clearly defined prototypical features (norms, values, etc.) reduce uncertainty. Hohnman and Hogg (2011, 2015) developed connections between TMT and uncertainty-identity theory. Their findings suggest that one way to mediate MS is by reducing self-uncertainty; and one way to reduce self-uncertainty is to identify highly with a group. An aspect of group identification is a worldview defense of one's group.

While participant interviews did not reveal uncertainty as a dominant emergent theme, they did display worldview defense of one's group. All but one participant defended a Christian worldview of a loving God in the midst of the mass shooting. P1 said, "...the pastoral role becomes that of the Pharisee. You have to interpret, why did God do this? Well, I don't think God did this." P2 said, "We could go into the theories of evil and what I think about it but pastorally we just have to reject what happened and call it evil and say, 'It did not come from God' saying, 'Why would God do this to you?', and this is the image of the cross. P3 said, "The very next question I get was, 'Why did God let this happen? Where was God?' That one I do have the answer. God didn't make this happen. Some crazy gunman made

this happen. God was there in that room with the gunman, weeping; God was with the first responders, and in the hands of the police who were helping escort people; God was in the hands of the normal citizens who just grabbed injured people and drove them to the hospital; God was there but God wasn't going to act the way we want God to act, God acts the way God acts and its beyond our comprehension. Sometimes why that happens but we gotta be able to name and identify that for people..."

C1 described creating space for questioning, "What is their faith telling them? What does their faith say about what has happened and, 'Where was God 2-hours ago?'" C1 also described their worldview defense, saying, "God did not make this happen. God did not cause this. God allows things to happen because we have free will." C2 also described another chaplain saying something that wasn't helpful. C2 said another chaplain responded to people who were asking, "Why did God allow this?" with, "They're with God now." C2 said the patients responded by saying, "Well, where was God 2-hours ago?" C3 described a worldview defense by saying, "All we can do...is trust in God's promises." C3 described the importance of "trusting God" multiple times during the first interview. Trust revolved around, "God's promise" and God's purpose." God's promise and purpose both related to a structured and ordered view of the world, one with meaning. All participants described meaning-making, or a world view defense. My interpretation is that this indicates pastoral caregivers and/or victims experienced MS and uncertainty, which they buffered by more highly identifying with their group. As previously stated, identifying with a group displays itself behaviorally, where group members defend worldview beliefs of their group (Hohman & Hogg, 2011, 2015). P3, commenting on both 9/11 and the Las Vegas mass shooting, said that people "poured in in droves after the event."

Exline et al. (2014) defines religious and spiritual struggle across six domains: *demonic*, the perception that evil spirits or the devil are assailing a person or the cause of negative events in the world; *divine*, negative beliefs or feelings related to God or a relationship with God; *doubt*, difficulty experienced in terms of one's questions regarding one's religious or spiritual beliefs; *interpersonal*, distress related to religious individuals, groups, or institutions; *moral*, guilt, anxiety, or worry with related to one's transgressions or moral shortcomings; and *ultimate meaning*, distress related to a lack of meaning in one's life. Religious or spiritual struggles occur as a result of an experience, that relates to persons, practices, institutions, and produces emotional distress or difficulty (Exline, 2013).

The psychology of spiritual struggle is a helpful psychological hermeneutic, and conversation partner, because it reveals a possible layer of the phenomenon of a mass shooting. A delimitation of the study is that it did not quantify or employ a psychological metric to examine religious or spiritual struggles. However, this does not mean that religious or spiritual struggles did not occur. In terms of this study, and the cultural and global phenomenon of a mass shooting, it seems reasonable that victims of the Las Vegas mass shooting may have experienced two types of struggle related to “supernatural agents”: *demonic struggle* and *divine struggle* (Exline, 2013).

First, participants described care situations where care seekers questioned the divine. P2 described victim responses that asked *why* God would allow a mass shooting or asked direct questions about God saying, “Why did God do this?” P1 indicated the possibility of *demonic struggle* where they alluded to a cultural stereotype of Las Vegas as “sin city.” P1, after stating that participants asked questions about why the event had happened responded with, “God did not do this, this is not punishment...”. In terms of *demonic struggle*, one could attribute the cause

of the mass shooting to either or both God or satan. P1 said, “this is not punishment for sin.” In this statement, God is described as an active agent who may have caused the mass shooting as a response to sin. In psychological terminology this could be described as *defensive theology usage* (Beck, 2004, 2006). An alternative interpretation could attribute the cause of the event to satan, if satan is the cause of evil, pain, and suffering. Alternatively, the Las Vegas mass shooting could generate a type of vicarious *moral struggle*. P1 described Las Vegas in terms of a popular stereotype, “sin city.” Here, one could attribute the cause of the mass shooting to the (im)moral behavior of the entire city.

A second area of spiritual struggle to consider is on the phenomenon of anger toward God (Exline & Grubbs, 2011). Only one participant described a care seeker who was “angry at God,” this does not preclude the likelihood that victims of a mass shooting will not experience anger toward God. Here, I think it is important to consider spiritual struggle chronologically, especially in traumatic situations. A victim of trauma may be overwhelmed with emotional and physiological experiences of trauma and it may take a while before they begin to process their trauma. As they begin to process their trauma, perhaps a year later, or three or four years after an event, this is where spiritual struggle and anger toward God might emerge. For pastoral caregivers, the psychology of spiritual struggle is important to be aware of because it will put “more tools in the toolbox” of assessment, to quote P1. An awareness or assessment of spiritual struggle, then, can guide and lead to more informed care practices.

### What is Needed from Pastoral Theology

Johnson (2020) suggests specialized training is required for more complex forms of trauma. Is this true for the context of a mass shooting? Participants described a surprisingly simple response that they used for a mass shooting: a ministry of presence. The focus of pastoral

care, then, should not be on more specialized training but drawing from the tools of pastoral theology to facilitate and equip pastoral caregivers to be present. As we have seen in TMT, uncertainty-identity theory, and the psychology of spiritual struggle, death and trauma can trigger complex psychological processes, interpersonal and social, that can complicate “being present.” Does pastoral theology have a trauma-informed approach to care for the context of a mass shooting?

A turn to pastoral theology could begin with and explore pastoral care in its historic context (Clebsch & Jaekle, 1964) or in a postmodern context (Doehring, 2015) with a tremendous variety of perspectives and approaches. I will not trace the history of pastoral care but I will instead collapse the history of care into its historic functions to suggest that the functions of pastoral care are insufficient for the context of a mass shooting. Healing, guiding, sustaining, reconciling, liberating, or nurturing are important functions of care but in the immediate aftermath of a mass shooting they are impractical.

One could make the argument that sustaining is an important function in the aftermath of a mass shooting. I would argue, however, it is not and should not be the first pastoral directive. A pastor could be motivated, out of the psychological drives discussed, to care for people to alleviate their own discomfort or struggle. *Why* a pastoral caregiver provides care is important, and it relates to ethics and professional practice. I will suggest that one way to protect a pastoral caregiver against defenses against death awareness, situational or self-uncertainty, or the phenomenon of spiritual struggle is to simply be present. In the section to come I will turn to the trauma theologies of Hunsinger (2015) and Rambo (2010) to suggest the function of care that is best suited for the context of a mass shooting is *witnessing*.

### Towards a Trauma Theology of Witness

There are two particular reasons why a theology of witnessing is a pivotal response for pastoral caregivers in the context of a mass shooting. First, pastoral caregivers described their experience of trauma. Trauma presents real obstacles to a ministry of presence, and as the psychological theories of TMT, uncertainty-identity theory, and the psychology of spiritual struggle have shown, pastoral care can quickly become about alleviating anxiety or angst within either the pastoral caregiver or the care seeker. This “fix-it” approach, or worse, “savior complex,” confounds the practice of care. To restate the thesis of this section, the function of pastoral care in the wake of a mass shooting is a ministry of presence. To be present, there are two sub-functions of care that prioritize a ministry of presence, *bearing* (Hunsinger, 2015) and *remaining* (Rambo, 2010).

Witnessing is a method of pastoral care that is specifically outfitted for the context of a mass shooting. For Hunsinger (2015), witnessing is about bearing the suffering of others. Insightfully, she acknowledges that trauma can overwhelm an individual’s ability to adapt or cope (p. 4). This mirrors P2’s statement indicating the immensity and trauma of the situation because it was “beyond our coping.” P2 and Hunsinger (2015) provide an insightful tool for how pastoral caregivers can stay present, continue to care, and not feel overwhelmed when things appear or feel *unbearable*. In the words of P2,

“We had a ritualistic way of directing our inadequacy and incompetence towards a place that could receive that, so...you take human emotions that are honest and allow them or point them all in the same direction, which, in this case is God.”

Hunsinger (2015) says, “witnessing relies not so much on its own skill and resourcefulness as on its trust in the redemptive suffering of Christ” (p. xiii). P2 would agree with this statement and add,

“You know Job is lucky. He didn’t die before he experienced redemption. There’s plenty of people, and you can say this of the people at Vegas and school shootings, whose story ended, so there must be a raising of the dead otherwise I don’t know how you can have a meaningful conversation about justice without writing off suffering.”

Hunsinger (2015) acknowledges the anxiety of trauma, that people are often times unable to overcome it (p. 4). This can lead pastoral caregivers to feel overwhelmed, helpless, and/or desire to protect themselves, and others, from their pain (p. 22). Already, Hunsinger’s (2015) conception of trauma addresses the conundrums of existential anxiety, uncertainty, and spiritual struggle and outlines the pathways of how people react to human experiences of death and trauma.

Hunsinger turns to Kaethe Weinggarten to construct her method of witness. Instead of “fleeing”, or repressing, suppressing, or attempting to overcome one’s feelings, the witness chooses to remain present (p. 23). “Remaining present” was C2’s assessment of patient needs in the wake of the mass shooting. C2 said, “They seemed stunned. They needed someone to talk to and just somebody to be calm.” C2 would agree with Hunsinger (2015) that the focus is on, “listening with care and responding with compassion” (p. 25). The particular benefit of this method of witnessing is that it organizes witnessing into a 2 x 2 diagram to include categories of empowered vs. disempowered and aware vs. unaware. This produces four types of witnessing as effective and competent, ineffectual and stressed, misguided with possible malpractice, and

abandoning with possible malpractice. Applied to psychological theory, if a pastoral caregiver is not aware of how they are being affected by the care situation they can be ineffectual and stressed, misguided and possibly perform malpractice, or abandon their care seeker in malpractice.

Rambo (2010) adds to the method of witness with her own theology of trauma that incorporates witnessing. Rambo says, “Trauma is what does not go away” (pp. 2, 15). The study of trauma is the study of what, “remains” (p. 15). This, “...entails attesting to the temporal distortions and epistemological ruptures of an experience...” (p. 15). Trauma is a storm that is, “always here” (p. 15). For Rambo (2010), witnessing is described as a middle way, between life and death, and remaining in this uninhabitable place (p. 16). To witness is to “observe, stand by, and to look on” (p. 23). C3, reflecting on a patient visit, wondered if they did anything that helped. In terms of witnessing, the function of witnessing is to help survivors stay connected to “this world” (Rambo, 2010, p. 24). She says that the primary crisis of trauma is to “remain” and “be one who remains”, witnessing to the “complex relations between death and life” (p. 26). Therefore, responding to C3’s concern, the function of pastoral care in the wake of trauma is to keep the victim connected to themselves, others, and “this world.”

### A Pastoral Theology of the Cross

Hunsinger (2015) and Rambo’s (2010) function of care is strengthened when it is situated within a pastoral theology of the cross. In this section, I will transverse their conceptions of witnessing within a pastoral theology of the cross (Thornton, 2002). First, I will define a theology of the cross, employing Solberg’s (1997) epistemology of the cross. Next, I will trace a context for the cross with Hall’s (2003) contextual theology of the cross. Then, I will incorporate

Thompson's (2004) feminist theology of the cross to prepare the way for Hunsinger (2015) and Rambo's (2010) function of witnessing. Last, I will engage Thornton's (2002) pastoral theology of the cross and use participant voices to describe how pain can too quickly be publicized and politicized. Here, I will reconstruct the cross to state that the first step, and possibly the only step, in pastoral care for the context of a mass shooting is simply to be present.

In the aftermath of a mass shooting, experiences can be so traumatic and the suffering so significant that pastoral caregivers may attempt to suppress, repress, or defeat normal human responses to suffering. Forde (1997) says these, "desires", need to be extinguished. If they are not, then one runs the risk of being a theologian of glory. In the context of a mass shooting, a theologian of glory will seek to provide answers, manufacture healing, transform suffering, and allay fears with reassurance. These realities are not possible, not in the aftermath of a mass shooting. Rambo (2010) acknowledges the ways in which death remains, even in life. She calls this an, "ongoing death" (p. 2). The drive towards life, healing, and restoration becomes triumphalism and supercessionism in which, "life wins out over death" and this "runs the risk of glossing over a more mixed experience of death and life" (p. 7; Hall, 2003, p. 17). Forde (1997) says a theologian of the cross looks at "the trials, the sufferings, the pangs of conscience, the troubles of daily life as God's doing and does not try to see through them as mere accidental problems to be solved by metaphysical adjustment" (p. 13). A theology of the cross is a "bottoming out" of this way of thinking and acting (p. 17). Pastorally, what this looks like can be said in the words of P2 where one is, "...directing our inadequacy or incompetence towards a place that could receive that...in this case it is God."

To turn in any other direction or to turn towards to any other place, to try to quell one's sense of inadequacy or incompetence, would turn one into a theologian of glory. The difference

between a theology of glory and a theology of the cross are subtle (Forde, 1997, p. 6). A theologian of the cross turns enters deeper into reality while a theologian of glory attempts to fix, suppress, repress, or reject reality. A theologian of glory will seek optimism, hope, comfort, benefit, and blessing, especially where there is only pain, suffering, heartache, loss, and grief. A theologian of glory fails to, “call a thing what it is” (Forde, 1997).

Solberg (1997) transverses the cross epistemologically. Here, an epistemology of the cross is about right knowledge: of one’s self, others, and God. Specifically, an epistemology of the cross is opening one’s mind and person to the reality of suffering others. It does not defend against knowledge or knowing to lay claim to ignorance or denial, and end only in deception (pp. 1-4). An epistemology of the cross does not privilege certain modes of knowing over other ways of knowing. Rationalism and empiricism are not prioritized over lived experiences and living wisdom. Epistemologies of glory are modes of knowing that erase and exclude the experiences of others for one’s own comfort or gain. C3 was very aware of the suffering they encountered and declared pastoral care to be a cross which they did not want to bear. However, C3 could not ignore the suffering of others. C3 was compelled by the knowledge of a suffering other and was moved to respond and come in to the hospital on October 1, 2017.

An epistemology of the cross will transverse a contextual theology of the cross (Hall, 2003). Hall describes a contextual theology of the cross in terms of incarnation. In the same way that Jesus came into the world and dwelt in, with, and among humankind, so also, a contextual theology of the cross will invite inhabitants “more deeply into the world, the real world, not the world as a religious construct” (P. 51). This context is a dynamic place where knowledge always co-exists with ignorance (Hall, 2003, p. 17). However, as TMT (Greenberg, et al., 1986), uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2011), and spiritual struggle (Exline, 2013) have

shown, inhabitants of the world do not have a preference or tolerance for ambiguity, uncertainty, anxiety, or doubt. Instead, ideologically, culturally, literally, there is a drive towards immortality, certainty, structure, and safety. Here, one is “continually on guard against the intrusion of reality” (Hall, 2003, p. 25). Yet, a contextual theology of the cross invites not only an epistemology of the cross but it will, “lead us more deeply into the world” (p. 51).

What draws one more deeply into the world, however, is Christ’s own ministry (Root, 2014, p. 93). A practical theology of the cross locates Jesus, incarnationally, in the world. It is through following the life of Christ, and participating with Christ, in the world, that one experiences and encounters Christ, incarnationally, through ministerial praxis. It is in the world, then, that one discovers and joins Jesus in ministry. This “becoming” in the world, is best situated in Thompson’s (2004) feminist theology of the cross because it “resists easy answer” (p. 139). It is unique because it offers a fresh epistemology that engages identity complexity (sinner/saint) and acknowledges and knows, by name, the intersections of existence (p. 142). A feminist theology of the cross makes room for alterity (death, uncertainty, and spiritual struggle) and offers critical reflexivity, an honest examination of one’s own life (p. 151). However, to be honest with one’s own life, one has to be aware of the (psychological) forces that are being exerted on and in one’s life.

#### Critique of Thornton’s Pastoral Theology of Glory

Thornton’s (2002) pastoral theology of the cross runs the risk of becoming a pastoral theology of glory in a few ways. First, Thornton’s (2002) suggestion that the personal is political could too quickly move a pastoral caregiver to political activism and leave care seekers in the dust and ashes of destruction. It needs to be emphasized, and described, that there is a time and a

place for political activism and the first act of pastoral care is not (necessarily) public, it is personal: bearing and remaining.

Thornton (2002) says, “A constant theme we keep emphasizing is the need to resist and protest against suffering caused by injustice” (p. 137). Returning to participant experiences, P2 alluded to the disparities in private versus public suffering, specifically as it influences how people talk about suffering. P2 discussed their observation by telling a story about the complexities of private and public suffering. P2 said,

“My friend is a pastor at Ohio State and a student was stabbed. And there was so much media there that care didn’t take place. So, there’s a danger that it becomes self-referential like, ‘Look at the care I’m providing’ and often times we have to admit that we don’t know until much later, if ever, what we did made a difference or not.”

P2 identifies two conundrums to pastoral care. First, media can grab hold of private pain and publicize and politicize it. The narrative is stolen by popular media and pain becomes a public conversation that dislocates and disenfranchises the victims, the very people pastoral caregivers seek to care for. Second, Thornton’s (2002) pastoral theology of the cross runs the risk of becoming “self-referential.” Here, justice work becomes about, “Hey, look at what I’m doing.” It refers to that, “...sweet seductive spotlight,” as P3 says. Social media is an interesting tool because it can be used to construct power by dominating or controlling the spotlight or the narrative. In my experience, it is difficult to talk about social issues that do not immediately dislocate, disempower, and disenfranchise victims. It is not their voices that are being amplified, it is the social justice advocate’s voice that is being amplified, or “shared”.

P2 describes the publicization and politicization of suffering, tracing the problems victims face in the wake of a national tragedy. P2 said,

“The particularity of a person’s suffering can be obscured by how...the conversation isn’t, ‘How do we care for this person?’ but ‘Do we believe gun control?’, ‘What is an effective means of curbing gun violence?’ You see answering that question doesn’t provide compassionate care, so in that sense national debate does obscure a person’s particular suffering which requires you to be attentive to them as an individual because they had a very individual experience of that event. And you can say, ‘Well I know what happened, I read the news report,’ but you don’t really. You can’t say, ‘Well I’m just going to give you an answer.’ I don’t know, we’re kind of stuck pastorally and I’ve complained about this before, we’re stuck in this season of punditry where we have to comment on every event or news story and really it just ends up being a conversation between the media and ourselves without actually having, and the media isn’t listening to us so it’s us talking to ourselves, and the people who are trying to figure out a pathway moving forward, well you have to do that by yourself. Like our national conversations about gun violence are not going anywhere so it’s not like we’re saying, ‘Let’s have this hard conversation and it’s going to get somewhere.’ That doesn’t lead, that’s not leading us anywhere so we are stuck in the cycle of conversation and for the people who are saying, ‘I’m really messed up today because I watched this guy get his head blown off today and a year from now, I’m farther down the road,’ they’re on that journey by themselves essentially. You know, maybe someday we’ll say, ‘Where are they now?’, but the media don’t facilitate that, so we’re stuck, and the clergy are really guilty of this,

we're stuck in a nation where every conversation has to be national...so I think the pastoral care question is, 'How is pastoral care local?'"

A more nuanced question for pastoral care would ask, "How can pastoral care be local and public?" and then seek to navigate that tension and duality.

P2 shared another observation of suffering in the wake of a mass shooting saying, "People have a sick fascination with people who have been through bad things and there isn't a genuine care for the person like, 'I'm sorry you had to be there, did you see dead bodies? How many people did you see die?'" Advocacy often benefits the advocate, typically in more ways than one. Advocacy can be a way of staging and amplifying one's own voice so that the victim's voices are not the one that is heard, it is the advocates.

P3 discussed the publicization and politicization of suffering by saying,

"Yes, very much so, media, mainstream media, and social media, that's what they do. It all turns into a blame game. 'It was bump stocks, it was failed policies,' it just becomes, it does nothing for the people who are injured and nothing for the people who are suffering, it just becomes another piece to perpetuate those headlines."

P3 continued saying,

"Social media is inconsistent, and the pundits are going to do it for the ratings and they want a bigger megaphone and a bigger soap box to get their voice out there...The pundits kept loving to say, 'This is now, officially, the worst mass casualty in the US.' This isn't helpful. We aren't having t-shirts printed up. And they kept saying, 'There could be one in the future.' Nothing of this was helpful."

It seems the issue in a political-pastoral theology of the cross is how to, “call a thing what it is,” in constructive ways that empowers, helps, and cares for victims, instead of dislocating or disenfranchising them. In addition, the advocate runs the risk of simply self-aggrandizing.

### Pastoral Theologies of the Cross and Pastoral Theologies of Glory

Applied to pastoral theology and care, a theology of glory avoids pain, suffering, heartache, and death. Instead, a pastoral theologian of glory seeks structure, certainty, confidence, hope, life, and healing where only sickness, death, darkness, and pain remain. A pastoral theologian of glory does not witness to what is but instead strives for what one wills. The will of the pastoral caregiver can be “sinful.” In the words of P3, the pastoral theologian of glory seeks after, “...that sweet seductive spotlight...” with “...long white flowing robes with the colorful stoles.” Here, “We are the last one in the procession, everyone watches us, we get to stand up there with all the pretty flowers, we stand up there with all of our arms raised, all of the lights are shining on us.” The pastoral theologian of the cross, however, “...knows that has nothing to do with you, you are merely pointing to God.” P3 describes the seduction of “knowing” and the certainty of knowing in pastoral care. P3 said, “There is a danger there,” referring to, “Knowing what that guy needs.” Here, one can fail to accurately assess what a thing is and, “You can do a lot more damage from that perspective.”

In the words of C3, a pastoral theologian of the cross comes into a care situation and comes before God with empty hands and plainly says, “Lord, what do we do with this? Lord help.” A pastoral theologian of glory has no need for God because they are self-sufficient. They need only turn to themselves, to the large recess of their own resources and “box of tools.” A pastoral theologian of glory does not understand, nor do they interpret their limits. Instead, out of an inflated sense of confidence or in their ignorance, they believe that they can help and heal a

person. A pastoral theologian of the cross witnesses to the cross, and in the words of P2, “...directs their inadequacy and incompetence...to the only place that can receive it...”, and that place is God. A pastoral theologian of glory witnesses to themselves and out of themselves, out of their anxieties, fears, and (weak) ego.

The pastoral theologian of the cross turns to God for everything. And as they turn to God, they are drawn deeper into the world and deeper into a knowledge, awareness, and relationship with those who suffer. Then, as they witness the suffering, they are able to bear the suffering and remain with the suffering in ways that do not masquerade in glory, but remain in the dust and ashes.

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have presented an approach to care for the context of a mass shooting. In addition, I described *witnessing* as a function of pastoral care to suggest that pastoral care, in the wake of a mass shooting, requires pastoral caregivers to bear the suffering of others and remain in the dust and ashes of trauma, death, and suffering. Furthermore, I have presented a perspective that suggests participant experiences included death awareness, uncertainty, and spiritual struggle. I presented this claim by transversing participant data with terror management theory (Greenberg et al., 1986), uncertainty-identity theory (Hogg, 2000, 2007, 2011), and spiritual struggle (Exline, 2013). Then, I explored the historic functions of pastoral care to suggest that the functions of healing, sustaining, guiding, reconciling, nurturing, and liberating are inappropriate for the aftermath of a mass shooting. Here, I presented a new function of care: witnessing. Then, I turned to a theology of the cross to quickly survey contemporary theologies of the cross and then situate witnessing within a pastoral theology of the cross. By introducing witnessing as a function of pastoral care, I argue that emphasizing the role of witnessing, as a pastoral theology

of the cross, a pastoral caregiver can resist the impulses of glory, reaching for self-esteem, situational or self-certainty, or suppress, repress, deny, or defend against spiritual struggle.

## Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### Introduction and Summary of Study

The purpose of this study was to describe pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting. In doing so, this study filled two empirical gaps: one in the psychological study of religion and spirituality and one in the field of pastoral theology. Participant interviews revealed 5 emergent themes: trauma, limits, meaning-making, ministry of presence, and help. Trauma was described in terms of pastoral caregiver trauma and care seeker trauma. All pastoral caregivers described the limits of their role and the request to make sense of the mass shooting. Pastoral caregivers described non-religious and religious attempts to make sense of the mass shooting. Ultimately, pastoral caregivers responded to the mass shooting with a ministry of presence as their primary tool. Last, pastoral caregivers described how people responded to the mass shooting in terms of non-religious help and religious help.

### Comparison of Findings with Extant Literature

Mass shooting research is broadly categorized along the following areas of study: coping (Littleton et al., 2011; Littleton et al., 2009; Palus et al., 2012; Reddy et al., 2015), mental health and mental illness (Budenz et al., 2019; DeFoster & Swalve, 2018; Draucker, 2020; Hammarlund et al., 2019; Lowe & Galea, 2017; Olufowote & Matusitz, 2016), shootings by geographic location (DiLeo et al., 2018; Fast, 2003; Hawkins et al., 2007; Littleton et al., 2011; Littleton et al., 2009; Palus et al., 2012; Ramirez et al., 2017; Stults et al., 2018; Vito et al., 2018), media psychology and social media usage (Cassidy et al., 2018; Hoffner et al., 2017; McGinty et al., 2014; Meindl & Ivy, 2017; Wilson, 2014), religion and spirituality (Brown & Matusitz, 2019; San Roman et al., 2019; Merceir et al., 2018), and treatment (Wusik & Jones, 2018).

Compared to other published research, this study explored pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting. The scope of this study differs significantly from other published research and provides an original contribution to the list of extant research. This study described pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting and 5 emergent themes were discussed. Pastoral caregivers experienced trauma, limits, meaning-making, ministry of presence, and help in the wake of the Las Vegas mass shooting.

### Interpretation of the Findings

The findings suggest that pastoral caregiver experiences are complex and multidimensional. Pastoral caregivers at times described not knowing what to do but then, would begin to describe what they did in response to the mass shooting. Therefore, even though they may have felt uncertain they all did something. To know what to do, pastoral caregivers said to “trust your gut”, “remember your training”, and “just be present.” A ministry of presence was the most consistent response used to describe how pastoral caregivers responded to the mass shooting. In addition, pastoral caregivers revealed the real trauma that befalls care providers, and anyone who witnesses the trauma of a mass shooting. Despite the traumatic events, individuals, the city of Las Vegas, and people responded at the national level to provide support and material resources. Interviews described that, although these intentions were well meaning, by the time material resources had arrived, most patients had already left the hospitals and the gifts were distributed to the first responders.

As an interpretive finding, I suggest that the theoretical phenomenon of terror management, uncertainty-identity, and spiritual struggle were embedded phenomenon in the wake of the mass shooting. I presented evidence to support the claim that these theories were phenomenologically manifesting across three locales: the pastoral caregiver, the care seeker, and

the care context. I labeled this as a conundrum to care because this interpretive finding highlights a limit of pastoral caregiver epistemology. This was identified as a conundrum to pastoral care because it was argued that pastoral caregivers cannot address what they are unaware of.

### Limitations

The primary limitation of this study is sampling bias. Seven participants were recruited utilizing a snowball recruiting method. All participants were recruited different in Christian denominational affiliation, age, and experience. It could be that denominational affiliation, age, or experience influence pastoral caregiver experiences of a mass shooting. In addition, there could be a limitation due to participant's race and gender. All participants recruited were Caucasian and male. Third, the interview protocols did not adequately consider the need for extended interview times to account for trauma-informed interviewing. My observational memos indicate that the initial interview was the first time pastoral caregivers had an opportunity to talk about or share their experiences of the mass shooting. pastoral caregiver experiences that were not interpreted or accounted for. Furthermore, a limitation of the study centers on the validity of the study. Participant transcripts were not triangulated with an outside coder. Codes were confirmed with participants but an external coder did not evaluate the established codes for interrater reliability.

### Implications for Pastoral Theology

Participant interviews reveal a deficit in both training and preparedness for the mass shooting. Participants suggest seminary did not prepare them for a mass shooting. This speaks more to a structural and institutional issue in seminary training. Anecdotally, pastoral theology is a relatively undervalued and unimportant course in seminary training or course requirements. In my experience I see three two facing pastoral theology. First, course requirements are eliminated

or reduced from seminary curriculum. This can be the removal of a required course in pastoral theology and care or the reduction of the course, from a 4 or 3-unit course to a 2 or a 1-unit course. Second, there is a disparity with *who* teaches pastoral theology courses. I can think of three divinity schools that employ students and scholars who lack either or both the clinical training or program emphasis to teach pastoral care. This seems to be a structural and institutional issue due to funding.

Therefore, I wholeheartedly agree with C3 who said, "...we need to do everything all the time as much as we can to be prepared, we need to put every tool in our tool belt that we can possibly think of..." C1 used an image of a fighter training for a fight to describe the importance of training in pastoral care. C1 said, "You fight the way you train; remember your training." However, if training in seminary carries structural deficits and limitations, then the practice of care and formation of pastoral caregivers will also reveal deficits. Again, this is not to say that experience cannot fill a deficit, as C1 said, "...no one can ever train for something like this, you have to experience it." Experience is also an instructor. Yet, C1 also acknowledges that one will, "fight the way they train." Therefore, training does seem to play a significant and foundational role in the practice of pastoral care and the formation of pastoral caregivers.

#### Recommendations for Future Research

Future research could continue qualitative research to examine the phenomenological aspects of a mass shooting along two dimensions: individual and institutional. It would be interesting to learn about how institutions, particularly academic institutions respond to a mass shooting. What do they do? How do they respond? What living wisdom do universities have to share that could help equip or prepare universities to respond to a future mass shooting event? In addition, Rev. Dr. Kate Wiebe, the CEO of the Institute for Collective Trauma and Growth, was

deployed to California Lutheran University in the wake of the Borderline shooting. As a pastoral psychotherapist and leader of a non-profit organization that specializes in trauma-care, I believe they would have copious wisdom and insights to share on the phenomenon of a mass shooting.

Quantitative research could explore terror management theory, uncertainty-identity theory, and spiritual struggle as three separate experiments. Here, individuals could discern if mortality salience is triggered by a mass casualty event. Specifically, TMT research could examine if self-esteem buffers existential anxiety, and look at particular types of self-esteem. Variables to explore could include: self-affirmation, attitude change, donating to a cause, and gratitude to see if these factors mediate existential anxiety.

Research in uncertainty-identity theory could measure the effect of a mass shooting on pastoral caregiver's sense of situational or self-uncertainty and predict how pastoral caregivers respond to situational or self-uncertainty. This line of research could also engage Richard Beck's conception of defensive theology usage to see if pastoral caregivers respond to situational or self-uncertainty by adhering to or affirming religious group doctrines to defend against uncertainty.

The psychology of spiritual struggle could examine what types of spiritual struggle care seekers or pastoral caregivers experience at different points in time after a mass shooting. Following the work of Johnson (2020), psychologists could measure spiritual struggle after one day, one month, one year, or more, to see if individuals experience spiritual struggle and begin to identify trends in religious coping. In addition, psychologists could examine the phenomenon of anger toward God to see if individuals experience a specific type of divine struggle. Research could also explore God-images to see if images of God influence coping.

Research in biblical studies could explore Job 16:2 and employ psychological criticism to discuss “miserable comforters” in the wake of a mass shooting.

## Conclusion

The purpose of this dissertation was to fill the empirical gap in the social sciences and practical and pastoral theology. In addition, this dissertation sought to present a new function of care for the context of a mass shooting: witnessing. Witnessing was situated within a pastoral theology of the cross and included two approaches: bearing and remaining. Combined, witnessing, bearing, and remaining were presented to help a pastoral caregiver be present with victims of a mass shooting and resist the urge or impulse to defend against the psychological experiences of trauma, both personal and vicarious. Ultimately, witnessing is a way for pastoral caregivers to sit compassionately with and provide care for care seekers in the dust and ashes of a mass shooting.

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## Appendix A

### Informed Consent

#### Claremont School of Theology Letter of Informed Consent

#### Consent to Participate in Research

#### Identification of Investigator and Purpose of Study

You are invited to participate in a research study, entitled “Trauma and Pastoral Care: Turning to Lived and Local Theologies of Care after a Mass Shooting.” The study is being conducted by Joseph Kim Paxton under the supervision of Rev. Dr. Duane Bidwell of Claremont School of Theology, 1325 N. College Ave; Claremont, CA 91711, [dbidwell@cst.edu](mailto:dbidwell@cst.edu) and (909) 447-2528.

The purpose of this research study is three-fold. First, this study seeks to learn from your experience and wisdom in your context(s). Second, this study seeks to understand *how* pastors interpreted what their community’s needs were and *what* pastors did in response to the mass shooting in Las Vegas. Third, this study will look to contextualize participant locations and responses by looking to their denominational affiliation, mission statement, theological beliefs, and ecclesial norms. Your participation in the study may contribute to scholarly and practical knowledge that may help pastors and congregations be prepared for a mass shooting and know *how* to respond and *what* to do. You are free to contact the investigator using the information below to discuss the study.

Joseph Kim Paxton  
1878 E. Fir Ave. Apt 104  
Fresno, CA 93720  
(480) 600-3727  
[Joseph.paxton@cst.edu](mailto:Joseph.paxton@cst.edu)

You must be at least 18 years old to participate.

If you agree to participate:

- 2 interviews will consist of approximately one hour in duration, with the option of a third meeting, lasting one hour, with other pastors who have participated in this study.
- Your participation will help the researcher explore *how* pastors assessed the needs of their communities/congregations, *what* they did, *what* appeared to be helpful, and *identify* tools and strategies that can help pastors be prepared and respond to a mass shooting.

- Your participation will consist of meeting with the researcher at a private and confidential location for 2 one-hour interviews. The first interview will be conducted to gather information regarding the aforementioned questions. A second interview will confirm and discuss initial findings with you, the participant, for accuracy. A final two hour optional focus group will be held where research findings will be shared with you, you will have an opportunity to share your perspective and experiences with other pastors, and you will be asked to work together to determine how your work can inform future pastoral approaches to care after a mass shooting. After the focus group, the participant may request a copy of the research results and they will be emailed or mailed when they are available.
- You *will not* be compensated for your participation. However, your participation in this study may help pastors and scholars to better understand “how-to” provide care after a mass shooting and better understand “what-to-do” before and after a mass shooting.

*The purpose of this study is to gain insight into practical theology, pastoral care and/or spiritual care. Participation in this study should not be regarded as—or substituted for—therapy by a licensed professional.*

### Risks/Benefits/Confidentiality of Data

There are a few possible risks in participation in this study. You may experience sadness, anger, or discomfort at being asked to think about the mass shooting in Las Vegas. The risk is minimal because you can withdraw at any time without penalty. It is possible you will learn something during the study about the risks of participation. If this happens, I will tell you so you can decide if you want to continue to be in the study. There is no direct benefit from being a part of this study. What I could learn could help other pastors to respond to mass shootings with more respect and compassion. There will be no costs for participating. Your name, email address and other personally identifiable information will be kept during the data collection phase. No personally identifiable information will be publicly released. However, if this data is published individuals within your contexts may be able to identify you based on quoted responses. Your personal information, if collected, will be used solely for tracking purposes. A limited number of research team members will have access to the data during data collection. Those research team members are: Joseph Kim Paxton and Rev. Dr. Duane Bidwell.

When the results of the research are published or discussed in conferences, all efforts will be made to protect your identify including the use of pseudonyms and changing identifying information. Audio and video recordings will be stored in a locked box, or password encrypted file, in the home office of the principle investigator to protect your confidentiality. Your information will be stored May, 15, 2019 and then destroyed.

### Participation or Withdrawal

Your participation in this study is voluntary. You may decline to answer any question and you have the right to withdraw from participation at any time. Withdrawal will not affect your relationship with Claremont School of Theology in any way. If you do not want to participate, you may simply stop participating.

### **Contacts**

If you have any questions about the study or need to update your email address contact the primary investigator Joseph Kim Paxton at (480) 600-3727 or send an email to [Joseph.paxton@cst.edu](mailto:Joseph.paxton@cst.edu). This study has been reviewed by Claremont School of Theology Institutional Review Board and the study number is **2017-1202**.

### **Questions about your rights as a research participant.**

If you have questions about your rights or are dissatisfied at any time with any part of this study, you can contact, anonymously if you wish, the chair of the Institutional Review Board by phone at (909) 447-6344 or email at [irb@cst.edu](mailto:irb@cst.edu).

Thank you.

### **❖ SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT**

*I have read the information provided above. I have been given an opportunity to ask questions and all of my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have been given a copy of this form.*

---

*Name of Participant*

---

*Signature of Participant*

*Date*

---

*Address*

---

---

*Phone*

*Email*

***SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR***

---

*Signature of Investigator*

*Date (same as participant's)*

**A copy of this document will be supplied for your records.**

## Appendix B

### Semi-Structure Interview Protocol

#### Sample Questions for Semi-Structured Interview

- What is your denomination and how long have you been a pastor?
- What did you think and feel when you first learned of the Las Vegas shooting?
- Did people from your congregation, including other pastors and staff, contact you?
- *How* did you determine how you were going to respond?
  - Did you meet with other pastors and staff to determine *what* you were going to do and *how* you were going to respond?
- *How* did you assess what the needs of your community and congregation might be after the shooting in Las Vegas?
- Did you have any previous training, education, or other experiences that helped you to respond to the Las Vegas shooting?
- Can you please describe *how* you and your church responded to the Las Vegas shooting?
  - Did you send out emails, texts, change your website information, etc.?
  - Did you hold a special religious service?

\*Note: Additional follow-up questions may be asked, as appropriate, with each participant.

## Appendix C

## IRB Approval

**COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)****COURSEWORK REQUIREMENTS REPORT\***

\* NOTE: Scores on this Requirements Report reflect quiz completions at the time all requirements for the course were met. See list below for details.

See separate Transcript Report for more recent quiz scores, including those on optional (supplemental) course elements.

- **Name:** joe paxton (ID: 4689600)
- **Email:** joseph.paxton@cst.edu
- **Institution Affiliation:** Claremont School of Theology (ID: 2897)
- **Institution Unit:** practical theology
- **Curriculum Group:** Social & Behavioral Research - Basic/Refresher
- **Course Learner Group:** Same as Curriculum Group
- **Stage:** Stage 1 - Basic Course
- **Description:** Choose this group to satisfy CITI training requirements for Investigators and staff involved primarily in

Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects.

- **Report ID:** 15317429
- **Completion Date:** 02/15/2015
- **Expiration Date:** 02/14/2018
- **Minimum Passing:** 80
- **Reported Score\*:** 89

**REQUIRED AND ELECTIVE MODULES ONLY DATE COMPLETED SCORE**

Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction 02/15/15 3/3 (100%)

History and Ethical Principles - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

The Federal Regulations - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Assessing Risk - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Informed Consent - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Research with Prisoners - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Research with Children - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

International Research - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Internet-Based Research - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects 02/15/15 3/5 (60%)

Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research  
02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

**For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.**

### **CITI Program**

Email: [citisupport@miami.edu](mailto:citisupport@miami.edu)

Phone: 305-243-7970

Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

### **COLLABORATIVE INSTITUTIONAL TRAINING INITIATIVE (CITI PROGRAM)**

### **COURSEWORK TRANSCRIPT REPORT\*\***

\*\* NOTE: Scores on this Transcript Report reflect the most current quiz completions, including quizzes on optional (supplemental) elements of the course. See list below for details. See separate Requirements Report for the reported scores at the time all requirements for the course were met.

- **Name:** joe paxton (ID: 4689600)
- **Email:** joseph.paxton@cst.edu
- **Institution Affiliation:** Claremont School of Theology (ID: 2897)
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Social/Behavioral Research with human subjects.
- **Report ID:** 15317429
- **Report Date:** 02/15/2015
- **Current Score\*\*:** 89

#### **REQUIRED, ELECTIVE, AND SUPPLEMENTAL MODULES MOST RECENT SCORE**

History and Ethical Principles - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Defining Research with Human Subjects - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Belmont Report and CITI Course Introduction 02/15/15 3/3 (100%)

The Federal Regulations - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Assessing Risk - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Informed Consent - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Privacy and Confidentiality - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Research with Prisoners - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Research with Children - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Research in Public Elementary and Secondary Schools - SBE 02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

International Research - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Internet-Based Research - SBE 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Research and HIPAA Privacy Protections 02/15/15 4/5 (80%)

Unanticipated Problems and Reporting Requirements in Social and Behavioral Research  
02/15/15 5/5 (100%)

Conflicts of Interest in Research Involving Human Subjects 02/15/15 3/5 (60%)

**For this Report to be valid, the learner identified above must have had a valid affiliation with the CITI Program subscribing institution identified above or have been a paid Independent Learner.**

### **CITI Program**

Email: [citisupport@miami.edu](mailto:citisupport@miami.edu)

Phone: 305-243-7970

Web: <https://www.citiprogram.org>

## Appendix D

## Faculty Endorsement

**Claremont School of Theology****Faculty Endorsement for Student Research**

I, Duane R. Bidwell, Ph.D., have reviewed the research proposal “Trauma and Pastoral Care: Turning to Lived and Local Theologies of Care after a Mass Shooting” of Joseph Kim Paxton, and I have agreed to supervise this student research as a part of his or her research toward the following degree.

X Ph.D.

       D.Min.

       M.Div.

       M.A.

       Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

I believe that the proposed project is consistent with customary academic research and that the project provides adequate protections for the human research participants.

Duane R. Bidwell \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Member

Duane R. Bidwell \_\_\_\_\_

Faculty Signature

4 December 2017 \_\_\_\_\_

Date